

Whole Child Education Series

Dealing With

Anger

A Guide for Parents and Teachers

Dr. Yitzchak Schechter, PsyD

Rabbi Doniel Staum, LMSW

A project of Yeshiva Bais Hachinuch

Dealing With Anger:
A Guide for Parents and Teachers

Printed in honor of the 5th Annual Dinner of
Yeshiva Bais Hachinuch

March 1, 2008

מוצאי שבת קודש פרשת ויקהל תשס"ח

The authors wish to express their great appreciation to
Rabbi Dovid Hojda for his outstanding editing of this work

©2008 by Yitzchak Schechter and Doniel Staum

לזכר נשמת
מרדכי נפתלי בן דוד

Sponsored by
The Felsinger Family

In Honor of

Rabbi Naftoli Eisgrau and Rabbi Dani Staum

and the dedicated and caring
Rebbeim, Teachers and Staff
of Yeshiva Bais HaChinuch

... and the teachers, parents, and children,
who have taught us so much
ומתלמידי יותר מכולם

The Schechter Family

MESSAGE FROM RABBI NAFTOLI EISGRAU
MENAHHEL, YESHIVA BAIS HACHINUCH

Adar I 5768

Before you start your trip through this handbook, some background is in order.

Yeshiva Bais Hachinuch is committed to investing our utmost in order to develop the potential of each and every Talmid. Our esteemed Rabbeim and teachers spare no effort, time, or resources to help our talmidim realize and utilize all of their inherent capabilities and talents.

One area that is often a particular challenge for Rabbeim and teachers is addressing the emotional component of a talmid. In a sense, emotions are the “forgotten half”, the aspect of a talmid that is often overlooked and neglected. The irony is that emotions are generally the overwhelming contributor to the demeanor, behavior, and attitude of a talmid.

One can know every technique, strategy, and trick in “the book”, but if a talmid is frustrated with his own lack of productivity, that frustration must be dealt with properly so that a Rebbe/teacher can hope to foster academic success.

Even the best lesson plans and the greatest multisensory lessons are insufficient to motivate a talmid who feels despondent and dejected.

Perhaps the most common manifestation of anxiety, fear, or a depleted sense of self esteem is anger. Anger is especially prevalent in children who feel that they are not producing as they would like to or feel capable of doing. Talmidim often do not understand how to deal with the anger that wells up inside them. Similarly, parents as well as Rabbeim and teachers, are often at a loss of how to properly respond when a talmid is angry.

When I approached our social worker, Rabbi Doniel Staum and our consultant, Rabbi Dr. Yitzchak Schechter, about creating a program to address emotions, they enthusiastically undertook the challenge. They were eager to create a program to help our Rabbeim, teachers, and parents address the emotions of our talmidim in a manner that would foster the growth of, “the whole child”.

That is how the “Whole Child Education” program began.

Our staff attended numerous workshops delivered by Rabbi Staum and Dr. Schechter over the course of a year. Separate workshops were conducted for parents to ensure that they would “be on the same page”.

Rabbi Staum also conducts regular sessions with the talmidim themselves to help educate them directly about emotions and how they effect us.

The program addressed developing positive communication with our children, dealing with their anger, sadness, frustration/anxiety, as well as the ultimate goal, building self-esteem and fostering resilience in our children. The workshops were extremely productive and the success is still palpable in the yeshiva.

What you are about to read is a small sample of the workshops given about anger.

When we address the “moach” of a child we cannot neglect his “lev”. I hope and daven that this valuable book, like the workshops they were created from, will have the desired effect to help mechanchim understand the importance of dealing with a child’s lev. May Hashem bench us that we see nachas from our children and talmidim as we help them grow into the great people they have potential to become.

החותם למען הרמת תורת תשב"ר

Rabbi Naftali Eisgrau

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Preface..... | 8 |
| Introduction..... | 13 |
| Anger- What it is, Why it happens..... | 17 |
| What is Anger? | 17 |
| Three Essential Components of Anger | 18 |
| Anger is a secondary response..... | 24 |
| Why do I / We get angry?..... | 26 |
| Cognitive Distortions Fan the Flames of Anger | 27 |
| Framing Anger..... | 30 |
| Expressions of Anger..... | 30 |
| Anger in Context..... | 32 |
| Modeling and Microphones | 34 |
| Genetics and Anger..... | 37 |
| Changes in Anger Thresholds..... | 38 |
| Emotional Expression | 38 |
| Educating to Emotion | 41 |
| Ideas from Tzaddikim about anger control..... | 44 |
| Overview from Torah and Chazal..... | 46 |
| Anger and Foolishness / Loss of rational self..... | 46 |
| Anger and its consequences | 48 |
| Anger and the family | 50 |
| Teaching and Anger..... | 51 |
| Anger in a Mitzvah | 53 |
| Anger in Practice: What to Do About It | 55 |
| Dealing with Anger..... | 55 |
| <i>Our</i> Anger First..... | 55 |
| Feigning Anger | 57 |
| Reciprocal inhibition..... | 58 |
| Speak gently while maintaining firmness | 60 |
| Reacting to Chutzpa | 61 |
| Addressing the child's anger..... | 63 |
| Be a record player but don't get drunk! | 67 |
| Facilitating Discussion about Anger..... | 70 |
| Managing Anger Prior/During a Blow-up | 75 |
| After The Anger Episode..... | 82 |
| REPRODUCIBLE HANDOUTS | 85 |

Preface

The highest goal of chinuch, in our estimation, is not merely the imparting of intellectual knowledge and the transmission of spiritual wisdom. Rather, it is the guiding of children towards utilizing their intellectual, spiritual, and emotional capacities as well as their social aptitude to become the fullest **עובד ה'** that *they* can become. This transformation process is what we call “chinuch.”

“Chinuch” is often mistranslated as “education”. The word chinuch throughout the Torah refers to the process of “consecration”, or setting something on its course to fulfill its purpose,¹ such as ²הגבוהת המזבח. Education is only a small part of the mechanech’s mission.

Chinuch is more about understanding, development, growth, competence, and success, than it is about the actual material taught.³ The child’s individuality, temperament, and uniqueness must be the foundation of his own chinuch.

This concept is at the core of the model established in the oft-quoted wisdom of Mishlei, **הנוך לנער על פי דרכו**— *Consecrate the youth according to his own way.*⁴

We seek to educate the child in context of himself, i.e. his innate abilities and limitations. This ensures that lessons learned remain with the

¹ Chovos Hatalmidim, introduction

² The **הנוך** of **שורש הנוך** appears 16 times in **תנ"ך** and each of those except one are specific to consecrations. The one exception is **משלי 22:6**.

³ Chovos Hatalmidim, introduction

⁴ Mishlei 22:6

child, because it ‘fits’ with who *he* truly is. The natural consequence of such an approach is expressed in the conclusion of the pasuk, **גַּם כִּי יִזְקֵן, לֹא יִסוּר מִמֶּנּוּ** – *Even when he grows old he will not deviate from it.*

Chinuch that is tailored to fit the child, and not vice versa, remains with the child throughout his life; wherever life may take him.

Yeshiva Bais Hachinuch

This approach is the hallmark of Yeshiva Bais Hachinuch. The Yeshiva prides itself on the individual attention, and focus on the development of each talmid. The Yeshiva strives to educate its talmidim, not merely by passing on ‘ancient wisdom’, but by educating “the whole child”. The goal is for every talmid to realize how the ‘ancient wisdom’ taught in the classroom touches him in a personal way. In the words of one Rebbi, “Our goal is to teach talmidim; not to teach Chumash and Mishnayos.” In a sense, the yeshiva strives to inculcate each talmid with a personal approach to learning that fits his kind of mind.

This was the natural context for the development of the Whole Child Education Program, which was the source of this book.

Whole Child Education Program

The Whole Child Education Program was developed as a way of guiding educators (Rabbeim, teachers and parents) to do just that --

educate the entirety of the child, including the emotional and social component. When all of the child's educators (and the child himself) are working toward the same goal, success is much more likely.

Five essential topics were selected: Communication, Anger, Sadness, Frustration/Anxiety, and Self-esteem. These would be the focus of the program over the course of a single year. Once a month, the Yeshiva hosted full-morning trainings for its Rabbeim and teachers regarding one of these topics.

The presentation was followed by a lively discussion about the presented material and its relevance to the classroom experience. Condensed workshops on the same topics were simultaneously presented to the parents. At the same time, the children of targeted-grades participated in group workshops on the same topics. This tri-faceted presentation of each topic was modeled after the words of Shlomo Hamelech who said, **והחוט המשולש לא במהרה ינתק** - *A thread of three will not quickly sever.*⁵

The model and program were developed and presented by Dr. Yitzchak Schechter PsyD., clinical psychologist and Director of the Center for Applied Psychology (CAPs) at Bikur Cholim-Partners in Health, and Rabbi Doniel Staum, LMSW, the Yeshiva's in-house Social Worker.

This project was initiated and encouraged by Rabbi Naftoli Eisgrau, the Menahel of Yeshiva Bais Hachinuch. It was his staunch support, energy, excitement and encouragement that led to the success of the program.

This handbook was created based on those workshops.

⁵ Koheles (4:12)

The hope is that it will become a valuable and informative tool to help educators in their quest to mechanech their children “wholly.”

Perhaps the greatest gift we can give our children is to teach them the art of resilience. We hope that this work, as well as the future publications of this program, will help educators learn how to foster resilience in their children and students. When we are able to guide our children to becoming their own mechanech we will ensure that, **גם כי יזקין לא יסור**, **בלמנו**, that the lessons they learned in Torah and life will be retained for the rest of their lives.

Acknowledgments

One of the great protectors against anger is humility.⁶ A project like this forces humility upon oneself. We could not have ventured to do it without the help of many people.

We would like to express our deep sense of *hakaras hatov* to Yeshiva Bais HaChinuch under the leadership of its phenomenal menahel, Rabbi Naftoli Eisgrau and its dedicated executive director Mr. Jordan Most. Their support and commitment made this project possible.

We are deeply indebted to Rabbi Dovid Hojda, whose excellent editing skills, perspective, and professionalism transformed a series of lectures into a readable, useful book. We would not have been able to do it without him.

To our wives, who serve as the inspiration for so much that we do and are the great educators of our family: We can never thank you enough.

⁶ Sefer HaMaspek Le'Ovdei Hashem; Shaarei Kedusha; Mesillas Yesharim

Finally, we would like to thank each other. The partnership on this project has been a pleasure, and despite deadlines and pressure, the anger level was consistent with the advice of the book.

Rabbi Staum, your patience, pleasantness and sense of humor are an inspiration. It is not surprising that the students and staff are so taken by you. It has been an honor and pleasure working with you, and I look forward to many partnerships in the future.

Dr. Schechter, you are renowned throughout the Orthodox Jewish Mental Health world as an expert in your field. It has been a particular honor working alongside you and gaining from your erudition and vast experience. Your sensitivity and devotion to helping others is an inspiration. The success of the workshops owes a great deal to your “unique touch” and perspective.

We pray that this book be received well by its intended audience and that it serve as a vehicle for change in the anger of children, their parents and teachers. With the knowledge that במדה שאדם דן מודדין אותו (in the way that we judge/act we are measured), may we all merit to the beneficence of Hashem's abundant רחמים , חסד and ארך אפיים.

Introduction

Whom This Book is For

This is a book for educators.

Are you are a parent, teacher, or any other person who plays a vital role in the development of even one child?

If so, then you are an educator.

And this book is for you.

We do not believe that “educator” is a privileged term, reserved for professionals employed within a school setting. We see parents as “educator” partners – and we theirs.

Parents play the vital role of incorporating the values of their children’s yeshiva into their homes. But, there’s more.

For the child, the home is the source for his deepest feelings, assumptions and grasp of the world. שמע בני מוסר אביך ואל תיטוש תורת אמך – *Heed, my son, the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the teachings of your mother.*⁷ The values taught in the home are integral to the process of Chinuch.

We trust that you see yourself as our full partner.

Therefore, as one group of educators speaking to another, we present this book to you: Parents, Teachers, and Rabbeim.

⁷Mishlei 1:8

A Word to the Reader

*A single, unified solution to all problems of teaching and parenting . . . **Does Not Exist!***

. . . and why not?

Life is complex. Human interactions are complex. Each individual is complex.

The way we act / react is a function of how we feel at one particular moment, Among other things, it depends upon who we are, what our history is, what happened the moment before, what else we have on our minds, and what the chemistry is with whoever else happens to be together with us at that moment.

That which worked in one situation at a given moment will not necessarily work in another. A technique that worked during a certain interaction between a certain child, and a certain parent or teacher will not necessarily work in another. That which worked for a certain child, parent, or teacher on a given day will not necessarily work for the same child, parent, or teacher on some other day -- or even on the same day, but under changed circumstances.

It goes without saying that a specific technique that worked for a certain child, parent, or teacher on a given day will not necessarily work for a different child, parent, or teacher – let alone under changed circumstances.

For that reason, the following cautionary note is in place: It is **not** our goal to provide specific interventions for specific cases.

Rather, it is to provide general guidelines.

We seek to provide the educator (i.e. parents, Rabbeim, and teachers) with an arsenal of materials and ideas that may be drawn from in order to help them formulate personalized “game-plans.”

Our goal is to create a “library of the mind.” Therefore, we will try to give over as much information as possible.

Ultimately, however, the information and skills we describe must make sense to you, the educator. It goes without saying that the technique must be “right for the child.” However, it must be “right” for you, the educator, as well.

How does one go about coming up with an approach that fits a given situation? Well, it starts with looking at an individual child and taking into consideration everything you know about him.

It also includes knowing oneself.

It continues with being prepared to change the way one does things.

Our presentation will be theoretical and practical.

We hope that at some point, you will find value in something of what we have to say, take the specific ideas that appeal to you, and say to yourself, “This is what I am going to implement right **now!**”

We recommend that, each time you put down this book, you take ten seconds to focus on whatever struck you as being practical for yourself in your own situation. Perhaps you might even try visualizing yourself implementing one of these things.

Use knowledge, intuition, and discretion. Remember that something that worked spectacularly well in one circumstance might be disastrous in

another. Not only could it be counterproductive, but it might actually be harmful.

The purpose herein is to provide tools and ideas. And the most important rule to bear in mind is: *There are no absolute rules!* Nothing works for everybody in all situations!

Our focus will be on how to effectively deal with episodes of anger: Your own and that of those around you.

Dealing With **Anger**

A Guide for Parents and Teachers

Anger- What it is, Why it happens

This book is designed to help you deal effectively with your own anger and that of your children and students. Guided by a Torah perspective, we utilize the tools of contemporary psychology. We focus on practical techniques that might be helpful before, during, and after an anger “episode.”

What is Anger?

Anger is a universal emotion; at some time or another, every one of us experiences it.

To give you an idea of how common it is, think of the many synonyms and gradations the English language has for it: fury, upset,

seething, annoyance, irritation, ire, to name just a few. (Actually, there are over forty anger related words).

Technically, anger is defined as the arousal of the sympathetic nervous system in response to a particular perceived stimulus. What that really means is that a person gets “worked up” in reaction to something that is either real or perceived.

Three Essential Components of Anger

Anger has three primary components:

- **Negative thoughts**
- **A perceived threat**
- **The ensuing physiological response.**

Negative thoughts are the core of anger. They set up the anger situation. They create its narrative.

A **Negative thought** is a subjective interpretation. It is the way that we translate the situation. It is the critical key. It is the spark that ignites the cycle of anger, defining its meaning. It is the lens, the “filter” through which we view the situation.

For example, let us say that a child’s crayons were knocked down by one of his siblings. He has several potential ways of thinking about the situation. He may say to himself, “They did it on purpose! They *wanted* to knock them down!”

These are what is known as negative thoughts.

That pattern might be further reinforced by a stream of negative recollections of past incidents. Whether or not they’re related, they

become related now: “He always does it on purpose!” “Like the time when he knocked down my Lego tower and ripped my picture!”

Now, the child did not *have* to interpret the incident in the way that he did.

He could have interpreted it as a simple accident. That would have avoided any anger. It all has to do with how the incident is “framed.” In other words, it is the cognitions or thoughts that set up the rest of the scenario.

Together with the negative thoughts there is a focus on **perceived threats**. This means that one highlights a perceived sense of threat or danger to one’s wellbeing.

This perceived threat is not limited to concern about physical safety. More often, it’s about a threat to one’s sense of autonomy, ego, dignity, or social standing.

For example, if a boy in the school yard is not allowed to play in a basketball game, or a girl is not part of the social clique, their reaction could be quite intense. They feel under attack. Their sense of self is being diminished.

This is especially salient in social settings, particularly amongst older, school-age children.

One of the greatest perceived threats is shame. It touches on the core aspects of one’s sense of self worth. The feelings can be intense.

Even children who are otherwise timid can be prone to anger when dealing with shame and loss.

Therefore, it is very, very important that parents and teachers seek to avoid shaming when they interact with children. It's that powerful of a trigger.

When a child experiences a potential threat, they will aggressively protect themselves, triggering a *physiological* (physical) response.

It is not only children who react strongly when perceiving shame, but adults as well – particularly when they sense that their authority is being undermined.

When the teacher or parent perceives that a child's disrespect or misbehavior threatens their place in the home or classroom, that it interferes with their own identified role, the reaction can be swift and powerful. The response is further activated by the sense of justification, the belief that it's not about their personal feeling or ego.

The adult might believe that, in order to maintain effectiveness, he is *obligated* to respond in the most vociferous fashion. Anything less (he believes) would be viewed as surrender.

Unfortunately, this is often the beginning of repeated cycles of anger and struggles for power.

Three components of anger:

- **Negative thoughts** - *misinterpreting thoughts negatively*
- **Perceived threats** - *a perceived threat to my safety, autonomy, self-worth or social status*
- **Physiological response** - *what is going on inside my body.*

The final stage of anger is the **physiological response**. This means that the negative thoughts and perceived threats elicit a physical reaction, an arousal within the body.

This activation and arousal is the thing that “feels” like anger. The autonomic nervous system has now become aroused.

The autonomic (self-regulating, automatic) nervous system has two components: Sympathetic responses and parasympathetic responses. Sympathetic responses are the arousal factors that allow the person and his body to be much more focused than usual. They create a “fight or flight” reaction, a feeling of “having to do something.”

The “fight or flight” reaction is very basic. It focuses its energy into responding to a threatening (or perceived as threatening) situation. For example, it’s what would happen within you when you realize that a bear was coming towards you to attack. Or, the attack might come from somewhere else – for instance, when other children are making fun of your shirt. The reaction is to either fight against that threat or to run away from it -- as quickly as possible.

The physiological effect includes the focusing of blood flow away from non-essential organs, an increase in heart rate, the inhibition of digestion, the release of adrenaline, and contraction of the pupils. All of

this leads to the goal of preparing the person for a concerted and focused reaction.

When we become angry, we feel threatened. Our system goes into this mode because we feel like something is about to occur -- and we must be ready for it.

The more negative the thoughts, and the greater the perceived threat, the more intense the physiological response. In other words, the more negatively one interprets the intent, the more negative (and more intense) the response will be.

The parasympathetic response is the counterbalance: it brings the person back to baseline. It slows the heartbeat, increases blood flow to extremities, stimulates digestion, dilates the pupils, and creates an overall more 'relaxed' feeling.

This is why people with anger issues have a very significantly increased risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke. Which dramatically demonstrates the reality described by Sefer Koheles - **הסר כעס מלבך והעבר רעה מבשרך** *Remove anger from your heart, you will take away evil from your body*⁸.

The research repeatedly finds that negative emotions, and especially anger, are major risk factors for heart disease and stroke. Negative thinking, rumination, anger, and poor anger management are basically equivalent to the most well known risk factors, i.e. cholesterol and hypertension!

⁸ Koheles 11:10

This extends even beyond the circulatory system. It affects the electrical pattern of the heart as well; fits of anger cause abnormalities in the pattern of electrical stimulation in the heart.

The brain figuring out the body

Our brain is constantly interpreting the body's physiological responses, making *inferences* as to what we must be *feeling*. For instance, if the brain senses a certain type of bodily arousal, it assumes that it is due to anger. A classic study (replicated in various fashions) studied actors who were asked to play the role of being angry. Blood samples were then taken from them. Sure enough, the blood showed elevated levels of catecholamines, the chemicals that function as neurotransmitters and hormones to initiate the body's quick response to stressful stimuli (the “fight or flight” response).

These studies demonstrate that “acting angry” can elicit a genuine feeling of anger.⁹ For this reason, it is particularly important that we help children to break out of certain patterns of behavior, as they tend to become accustomed to behavior patterns and the moods that emerge from them.

It is quite common that the brain will read physical signs such as anxiety, tiredness, and “feeling hyper” and misinterpret them, reading them as “anger”. For example, when dealing with patients who have a

⁹This model of behavior creating feelings mirrors the well known model of mitzvos often articulated by the Sefer HaChinuch, האדם נפעל לפי פעולותיו, and האדם נפעל לפי האדם נפעל לפי פעולותיו. (Mitzvoth 16, 40, 89, 264, 289, and 324). There are several studies of cognitive dissonance that have also shown that behaviors shape attitudes, rather than vice versa.

history of panic attacks, it is quite easy to induce a panic attack, simply by replicating the physiological conditions of the attacks, like by having them hyperventilate or by increasing their heart rate.

The brain ‘checks with the body’ to see what it is feeling. So, if the body is sending a set of known signals that the body associates with panic, it will assume it is having a panic attack. The brain will then supply the panic thoughts.

Anger works the same way. If the body is agitated or the sympathetic nervous system is aroused in a certain way, the brain will interpret those signs as anger, even without the presence of negative thoughts or perceived threats.

Example:

Yonah takes away Yaakov’s snack. Yaakov begins to think, “He took my snack, and he wanted it! He took it from me! Now I don’t have my snack! I will be angry!”

He gets more and more worked up.

When he feels his body becoming agitated and going onto high alert his negative feelings and thoughts increase also, to stay in tandem with the arousal.

The cycle continues to intensify and overcomes other thoughts. It diverts attention from other things going on.

This child is hyper-focusing on what occurred.

Anger is a secondary response

Anger is a secondary emotion, as opposed to a “primary emotion.” The primary emotion is the emotion experienced immediately prior to the onset of anger, the trigger that precipitates the anger.

As described, before we get angry, certain other feelings precede it. For instance, a child may feel afraid, attacked, offended, disrespected,

forced, trapped, or pressured. If these feelings are intense enough, that emotion metamorphoses into anger.

If we limit ourselves to addressing the secondary feeling, then we have neglected to identify and address the unmet, primary emotional need.

When a child says “I feel angry,” neither he nor any one else knows what would help him to feel better. Therefore, when we address a child’s anger we must seek to identify the primary emotion. The first step is to determine WHY the child is angry. What happened before he became angry?

Example:

One day, after school, Shloimie burst into his home.

He threw his coat on the floor, stormed upstairs, and slammed the door to his room.

His mother waited a few minutes. Then, she knocked on his door and walked in. There Shloimie was, lying on his bed.

She sat down and gently asked what had happened in Yeshiva that day.

It took some time before she was able to understand what had triggered the anger.

A group of Shloimie's friends were going away for Shabbos and they wanted Shloimie to come as well.

But, Shloimie had never been away before. He was nervous about being away from home just with his friends for the first time.

All day long, the boys had kept pestering him to agree to come with them. Each time, he refused.

By the time he came home, he felt so pressured, that he just burst into tears.

Why do I / We get angry?

One of the most overlooked causes of anger is the feeling of personal failure and disappointment. When older children and adolescents have suddenly become volatile and quick to anger, personal failure and disappointment could very well be at the root. The educator may suspect that the child may have, for the first time in his life, been exposed to inappropriate material or some other thing that is strongly disapproved. He may be feeling tremendous guilt or sadness. It may be manifesting as anger.

Failure and feelings of failure - justified or not - can also be important catalysts of anger. Children, who are beginning to realize their own limitations and deficiencies, struggle with self-image. Educators

should take this into account and try to counteract this by stressing the child's strengths and affinities.

Cognitive Distortions Fan the Flames of Anger

Aside from the negative thoughts and perceived threats, cognitive distortions and “automatic thoughts” have a powerful effect on the anger experience, often exasperating it. Common examples would be “mind reading” (assuming intentionality), “fortune telling,” catastrophizing, exaggeration, and hyper-focus.

Example:

The teacher walks in to the classroom. She finds Moshe about to beat up Baruch.

The teacher asks Baruch what happened. Baruch says, “I was walking by and I kicked over his knapsack by accident. Then he went nuts and came to attack me!”

Now, the teacher asks Moshe what happened.

*He replies, “I just spent twenty minutes (which is really two minutes) making it neat! Then, Baruch, who wanted to get me back for last week, came and kicked it over **on purpose!** Now, **everybody** is looking. **Everybody** is laughing at me! And they **all** saw how he got me! I will **never** be able to fix my knapsack again! And, I am the one who is going to get into trouble -- even though **he** started up with me!”*

If we analyze the above example, we can break it down into the following progression of cognitive distortions:

- **Intentionality/Mind reading** -- Moshe is *certain* that he knows Baruch's intentions. He can “read Baruch's mind” and *knows* that he is “doing it on purpose.”

- **Fortune-telling and catastrophizing** -- Moshe is predicting the outcome (fortune telling). He knows *exactly* what will happen. He is *certain* that the outcome will be a *terrible* one (catastrophizing). This hyper-focus on all potential negative outcomes further exacerbates his anger, as it projects the problem into the future.¹⁰ This pattern of seeing the worst outcome and assuming that it will be a constant in the future, is a primary feature of the cognitive characteristics of depression.
- **Exaggeration** -- In describing the duration as “twenty minutes,” he is distorting by exaggerating. He is overstating because it is his anger that is doing the thinking for him. The effect is that his anger and negativity will intensify. The hyperbole demonstrates the strength of the emotional experience. It has him saying, “Why was this terrible? Because I worked so hard on it!” Interestingly, though, the hearing of their exaggerated perspective may actually help the educator understand how the child is actually experiencing something, in that two minutes feels like twenty.
- **Hyper-focus** -- By becoming hyper-attuned, he is adding negative thoughts. When he perceives that “everyone is looking and

¹⁰ Catastrophizing is a very negative, though common, pattern of negative outcome. It is part of Seligman’s, as well as Beck’s, cognitive triad of depression, thinking that myself is negative (internal), things will always be negative (stable), and that everything is negative (global). This is linked to lower life expectancy, greater illness and several other problems. One particular study followed Harvard alumni over tens of years and found that optimists lived healthier, more enjoyable and longer, lives. (Yet another reason for pessimists to be pessimistic).

laughing at me,” this magnifies his negative thoughts; now he is both exaggerating and catastrophizing. He is now completely focused on the negative. He is sure that this moment will lead to an abysmal outcome.

Moshe’s logic is obvious: “Of course I have a right to pick up a book and smash it on Baruch’s head! Otherwise I am allowing this to happen and it will happen again -- and no one will do anything in my defense!”

This whole incident is the “last straw” because all of it is on top of the fact that Moshe didn’t eat breakfast this morning, missed the bus, took the wrong lunch, and is having “the worst day ever”.

Note to the Educator:

Remember: The misperceptions are driving the experience. The irrationality of the moment of anger makes it almost impossible to affect change at that moment. However, since the automatic thoughts and cognitive distortions are so fundamental to the anger experience, learning to recognize and challenge them is essential to returning to baseline and being calmer. This is an essential feature of what parents and teachers need to do, though not necessarily at the moment of conflict (see below).

Framing Anger

How we describe and experience anger is based on several essential factors:

- **Intensity**
- **Expression**
- **Context**

Intensity of anger

Having a parent or teacher screaming with full force is clearly different than having that parent or teacher simply giving a look of consternation. Similarly, experiencing a friend becoming upset, but getting over it by recess time, is not the same as experiencing protracted fits of anger that last all week.

It may be appropriate to display anger under certain circumstances. However, in order for it to be “successful,” it must match the situation. An intense display in response to a minor infraction can be counterproductive, as would be a subdued response when a strong reaction is called for.

The Rambam says - "לא יכעוס אלא על דבר גדול שראוי לכעוס עליו" - "One should not get angry only about something great that is appropriate to get angry at so that [he] should not do the same thing another time"¹¹.

Expressions of Anger

Anger also varies based on its method of **expression**. It can be expressed directly through words (parental admonition) or through actions

¹¹ Hilchos De'os 1:4

(loss of recess, loss of points on a test). It can be expressed subtly and non-directly, without explicit expression (or even acknowledgement) of the anger.

For example, a teacher who is upset at a student, but not necessarily expressing it, may still have lingering feelings of anger towards the child. That anger might manifest itself sub-consciously at a later time, for instance when the teacher is grading the child's test, filling out his report card, or in the tone of conversation with the parents or principal.

Example:

Chaim was particularly chutzpadik in the course of the week. One instance particularly hit a nerve with his teacher.

The teacher is well-aware that Chaim has a challenge in maintaining derech erez and is trying to help him improve. Yet, negative feelings and a sense of hurt lingered within him. (After all, he is only human).

Later that week, the teacher recognizes upon reflection that his reactions to Chaim over the course of the week were unreasonably harsh. The extra perks normally allowed Chaim, such as handing out sheets to the class and being allowed to get a drink during class time, were no longer forthcoming. The principal also noticed that the teacher was unusually critical and unforgiving when talking about this child.

Having noticed that this negativity toward the child had crept into himself, the teacher thought back to the "button" that Chaim had pushed the previous week.

When the teacher identified the source of the latent anger, his attitude towards Chaim became more supportive and tolerant. As a result, Chaim's behavior showed improvement.

Unlike in the case of the teacher described above, it often happens that the anger is *never* recognized by the "angry" person. It continues to

work “unconsciously” whenever the “angry” individual thinks about the other one. The target, however, is very much able to recognize the anger, not necessarily with specificity.

This is common with children. Often, they are correctly sensitive to the “vibes” in the air, without being able to attach specific names. It is particularly frustrating for a child when parents or teachers minimize -- or even deny -- anger or negativity. The adults might be saying, “No; I am not upset!” when, in fact, they are – but not acknowledging it. This is confusing and frustrating for the child who, on the one hand, feels the tension but is told that his reading is mistaken.

The experience might then go “underground,” with the frustration increasing because an authority figure has invalidated it. A further consequence of the adult’s denial is that the adult modeled “avoidance of emotional self-reflection”. This could unwittingly reinforce the child’s inability to identify his emotions. He has seen an adult figure negate apparent emotions and he learns that he must do so as well. More significantly, when the child sees this often, he may eventually learn to doubt his own experience, as he feels consistently invalidated. This could lead to a loss of emotional stability. It often translates into a need to react to even the smallest triggers. He has learned to believe that he has incapable of distinguishing between large and small provocations.

Anger in Context

Anger must always be understood in **context**, meaning: Who is the one who’s angry? What is the relationship between him and the target?

What is the history of the anger and its triggers? Where was the anger expressed?

These questions are integral.

The anger experience is not limited to the interchange of words and actions. The impact is in the “story,” i.e. the situation and personal significance that lies in the background.

For instance when a beloved teacher, who the child views as generally being “in his corner,” gets angry at the child, it’s quite obvious that the child will be more greatly affected than if the same reaction had come from a substitute teacher.

Similarly, when the type of parent who rarely gets unsettled, expresses anger at a child, the effect will obviously be more powerful than it would be from a parent who scolds the child regularly.¹²

Another factor in evaluating context is to look at the **trigger**, meaning the event that immediately precipitated the anger response.

Context also means looking at *where* the incident plays out. Who is present and where it happens makes all the difference. Obviously, there’s a grave difference to the child between getting reprimanded in private versus being chastised in public, in the presence of friends or siblings. The shame, anger and embarrassment are not just harmful for the moment, but can have a long-lasting impact on the relationship.

¹² Not surprisingly, a parent (or teacher) who is constantly yelling at the child will yield far less effective results than if the yelling is sparse. Many children report that when their parents scream at them so much they just “tune them out.”

The need to constantly yell at the child is both a general parenting issue, since it is probably not effective, as well as an anger issue, since sometimes the parent just needs to “get it off their chest” and say what they want to say, even though it is not useful to the situation.

Context frames the reaction as well. When a child displays anger in a public place or in a public way, it can trigger a disproportionate response, not because of what the child has done per se, but because of the embarrassment felt by the teacher and parent.

It is always instructive to know the history of the child, his personal style, and the models for expressing anger he sees at home.¹³

It is likewise instructive to direct those same questions to the parent and teacher.

Context works both ways. Just as a long and difficult day of frustrating work decreases the threshold of the parent, so too with the child who has just come back from his own “long day at the office.”

Modeling and Microphones

Children are careful observers of the way anger is expressed by the significant adults in their lives, whether at home or at school. We cannot fairly critique our children’s and students’ anger if we are not actively engaged in critiquing our own.¹⁴

¹³ There are expressions of anger that reflect pathology and are not just “normal” anger. In those cases, a mental health professional should be consulted.

¹⁴ This certainly does not imply that in every situation the parent/teacher is at fault! There are many situations that the child is primary in the incident. However, in most situations, there are more complicated factors, be they situational factors or even subtle contributions of all players involved. The gemara in Berachos recommends that if one finds himself in a challenging situation, *יפשפש במעשיו*—He should search into his own actions. In response to the question of how one can know if they have successfully identified the “deed” that they need to rectify, the answer is simple. If one finds ‘something’ he is certainly not wrong. Here as well, when one searches his interactions and discovers his own contributions to the situation through anger, he is certainly not wrong.

Example:

A woman once came to my office (YS), requesting assistance for her child. She explained that the child was constantly overreacting, no matter what the situation, and appeared to be overwhelmed with problems.

The mother came to the initial interview accompanied by her youngest child, a toddler, allowing him to hesitatingly explore the office as we talked. It was apparent that the child had only recently learned to walk.

Given that he was just beginning to exercise his newly-acquired talent for walking, the toddler stumbled repeatedly.

Each time, the mother nearly panicked: “Oy vey! Are you ALRIGHT?”

She would then interrupt our conversation and focus on the child.

The way I saw it, her response was completely out of sync with the situation. She was being dramatically over-reactive.

I told her, “This seems to be similar to your description of what is happening with your son.”

One of the most important predictors of how a child will handle anger is based on how his **parents** react to anger. Children are a microphone and amplify the lessons they learn from others in their own immature manner.

Children mimic, in their own childish fashion, the tendencies of their parents.

The parent and teacher often do not fully recognize that a child’s outburst of anger and low tolerance for frustration are carbon copies of their own response, albeit transposed into a childish style. For that reason, when parents come in and consult with me (YS) regarding anger in their adolescent, I usually begin with the question of “How and when do *you* get angry.” Usually, there is a correlation.¹⁵

¹⁵ This is the explanation of the gemara at the end of Sukkah (56b), stating that the locker and ring of the Bilga family of Kohainim was sealed because their daughter, Miriam Bas

For example, if a parent reacts harshly when someone cuts him off on the highway or demonstrates a low stress tolerance in some other stressful situation, his child will pick up on it. When there is a particular “mini-crisis” at home and the mother responds by snapping at the people involved, children pick up on it.

When the child becomes inflexible and angry when faced with having to settle for a non-favorite ice cream flavor, the adult often becomes exasperated. After all, it’s so petty! What is he getting all worked up over?

True, these things might very well seem petty and disproportionate to the parent and teacher, but is it is most likely a behavior that has been learned from a significant adult. In the adult’s case, it wasn’t about ice cream, but about traffic delays, spilling something on their shirt, or a deadline at work.

From the child’s perspective, however, his own crises are no different.

We must recognize that our children are very much of a reflection of our own reactions and responses.¹⁶ One should not underestimate the effect modeling has on children.

The “Do as I say, not as I do” model absolutely does not work.

For this reason, the place to start addressing the anger is within ourselves. Helping to break any cycle needs to start from the top down.

Bilga, had repeatedly acted inappropriately. The actions of the daughter were viewed as a clear reflection of the actions and attitudes of the larger family.

¹⁶ The truth is that sometime parents and educators want children to be better than themselves and not have their faults. That pressure is often too great and not fair. As Rav Hutner is quoted as saying, “Children are not the second chapter of their parent’s book”. We can give them guidance and hope they are receptive, but maintaining unfair expectations is simply unfair and stifles the child’s growth.

Genetics and Anger

There can also be a genetic disposition to anger. Nonetheless,
GENES DO NOT DETERMINE ONE'S DESTINY!!!

Although genes influence one's personality, they do not dictate how a person will act or what kind of a person he will be. Most importantly, genetics do not dictate the choices that one will make.

Rather, genes are a likely indicator of where the individual may be challenged and where he will need to focus in order to work at controlling his tendencies. But the buck stops there. Excusing one's behavior because "that's just the way I am" is spurious. From an educational perspective, it's unacceptable.

Although there is no "anger gene" per se, there are patterns of physiological arousal that are potentially motivated genetically.

Children who have "anger issues" must be taught that although they may be particularly challenged in this area, they can (and must) learn to control their anger. Their anger need not control them.

The first step is to normalize the fact that they have a temper. It is especially beneficial to relate stories of great individuals who had/have anger issues and learned to control them. The mere fact that a great individual struggled with the same issue and was able to overcome it on some level, is very relevant to the child and can be very encouraging (see the section on using "gedolim stories"). If the child personally knows an individual who has "worked on his/her anger" it is a more powerful lesson, because it is someone he can relate to.

Changes in Anger Thresholds

One's anger threshold changes constantly.. It can change based upon how tired or hungry one is, as well as everything else that is happening at that moment in their lives.

Annoying encounters with classmates and co-workers are infinitely more annoying after a poor night of sleep and a missed breakfast than they are with a full night's sleep and a full breakfast.

School personnel must remind themselves that a child may have come to school already in a bad mood. Anyone dealing with the child has to take into consideration their stress level when walking into the situation.

This is true for adults as well. Going into any situation under stress will impede anyone's best effort to perform well.

Bad moods and bad situations are not an excuse to have a "free pass." Clear limits must still be set. There are certain things that schools and homes can not afford to tolerate, no matter what is otherwise going on in the child's (or teacher's) life.

Emotional Expression

It is often a great challenge for children to identify and express their feelings. Although something may clearly be bothering them, they may not be able to properly articulate what it is.

We can help children learn to identify their feelings by helping them develop a vocabulary for communicating both positive and negative feelings.

Psychological theory teaches that the degree that one is able to develop a sophisticated and subtle language for his emotions is the degree that he is able to understand and address his emotional life.¹⁷

Often, an inability to speak about emotions causes great anger and frustration. This can be observed in children with expressive language disorders. Biting, aggression, and inappropriate language may be used as substitutes for verbal communication of feelings.

On the positive side, when children are able to develop a language and vocabulary of emotions, they are able to differentiate emotions, express them, and cope better with the vicissitudes of life.

¹⁷ This is related to the Sapir-Whorf theory often known by the idea that Eskimos living in snow have many more names for snow than other cultures. The more one is attuned to something the greater his verbal sensitivity will be for each aspect of that object. This is not so different than the Rambam's explanation in Moreh Nevuchim 3:8 of why Hebrew is called *lashon hakodesh*.

Practical Suggestion:

Several simple techniques can help facilitate a child's development of emotional language.

Adults could take care to use emotion descriptors. For example, "I saw my old friend in the store today. And I was both surprised and overjoyed!"

Another example: "When you starting fighting with your sister today, I was very upset. When you were able to stop the fighting and make up with her, it made me so pleased!"

Here's another technique: Use "I am feeling _____ today" posters around the house or classroom.

Another technique is to train students in school and children at home to use "I Statements." This means that the person expresses his own need or feeling without accusing or attacking anyone else. This is a helpful tool in training children AND adults in self-expression. There is no need for the "you did X, you are X."

When used over time, "I Statements" can increase self awareness, reduce direct confrontations, and reduce defensiveness. They can pave the way to more effective communication.

An "I-Message" has three parts:

1) I feel _____

Be specific about your emotions. You can use more than one word.

2) When you _____

Give details of how your friend has acted or what he or she has done.

3) Because _____

This is the hard one: the "why."

For example: *"I feel uncomfortable when you yell in anger, because it makes me uncomfortable to be around you."*

Educating to Emotion

It is important to normalize the anger (i.e. the automatic emotional reaction) but NOT inappropriate action! Although anger is an emotion that flares automatically when stimulated, we are always responsible for how we act. Anger is NEVER a valid excuse to hurt someone else in any way. It may be harder for some children, but blaming misbehavior on “my nature” is unacceptable.

Periodic discussions about anger and other emotions can be very helpful. Teachers and parents can easily incorporate the imparting of social skills and facilitation of emotional development into their reading sessions. Well-conceived works of fiction follow their characters through a variety of emotional and personal challenges. Students learn to identify with another perspective, see their struggles, and better understand their own emotional experience.

Writing assignments can challenge students to express their emotional selves on any number of topics.

History and social studies teachers can explore the impact moments in history have on the lives of others, focusing on the emotional perspective.

Math teachers could take a moment from their lesson to mention the frustration some students may be feeling with the work.¹⁸

It goes without saying that Torah-based lessons can also teach about emotions and self-improvement. The Torah is replete with stories of

¹⁸ *Perhaps, math problems could be altered to include Social Skills- If Jim is driving 65 mph on the parkway and the fellow in front of him is driving 55 mph, how long will it take before Jim gets angry?*

anger, jealousy, fear and joy. Its words are full of messages about character and growth¹⁹.

¹⁹ The story of Yosef comes to mind, as one example of being particularly rich in this regard. The פסוקים themselves describe a very wide range of emotions that were present at the conflict and reunion of Yosef and his brothers. The intensity of the confrontation, the courage of Yehuda, the difficulty of Yosef to contain himself upon seeing Binyamin and their utter shock at his finally revealing himself to them.

Note about using stories

Stories can often convey a message about ideals that are unrealistic for most people. When we say a story we need to give it as least as much thought as other concepts we teach. Sometimes, stories get the least amount of thought and, without our realizing it, it can be very counterproductive. Chazal see stories as a very powerful and important teaching tool. The Ramchal, writes in his introduction to לישרים תהילה, one of the three plays that he composed, in the voice of the משל (parable) that the משל is an ancient tool that serves wisdom by revealing profound ideas with simple words and “ ובתוך לבב איש חץ מוסר “ וידעת, לירות (בלי אהטא) מאין כמוני and knowledge I shoot (without missing) there is none like me. Even without the person listening does not know they learned. Lehavdil, this applies to literature as well. English literature is a powerful tool to teach emotions and ideals. It should not be underestimated.

We must separate between the lofty ideals of never becoming angry, which is unrealistic and the ability to control one's emotions. We have to think about how to bring this concept down to the level of our students in ways that they can relate to and understand. We also have to remember to not have unrealistic expectations of our children, “Look at how Rav Yisroel Salanter was able to control himself! Why can't YOU be more like he was?”

Ideas from Tzaddikim about anger control

- Practicing speaking softly. As the Ramban writes in his prescient letter to his son- תתנהג תמיד לדבר כל דברך בנחת לכל אדם ובכל עת ובוזה – תנצל מן הכעס – Accustom yourself to always speak gently to every person and in every situation and in this manner you will be saved from anger
- On the Mishnah²⁰ **סייג לחכמה שתיקה** -- *a fence for wisdom is silence*, the Kotzker Rebbe once said that the סייג - fence around wisdom is when one has nothing to say and remains silent; חכמה-wisdom itself is when one has something to say and remains quiet anyway!
- The ראשית חכמה suggests that one accept upon himself to donate a specific sum of money (an amount the individual considers significant) to tzedakah every time he becomes or acts angry.
- The של"ה הקדוש suggests that, when in a state of anger, one grab hold of his tzitzis (כנף is the same gematria as כעס).
- Not having a conversation when angry. Rabbi Elya Lopian would fill his mouth with water whenever he was angry so that could not talk until he calmed down.

²⁰ Avos 3:13

The main purpose of these exercises and concepts is to help foster conscious, rational thought in situations where the natural reaction might be to enter the automated state of “angry.”

Most anger responses are impulsive, irrational, and knee-jerk. Therefore, when one feels the anger “coming up on himself,” the individual is well-advised to try various techniques that will help him to catch himself. For instance, one could do something not directly connected to the anger. Or, he could resolve to take upon himself a particularly unpleasant commitment.

These help distract one from the emotional aspect and help achieve a degree of rationality. These techniques are not written in stone. We encourage (and expect) you to adapt them to whatever best suits your own personality, individual needs, and circumstance.

Overview from Torah and Chazal

Torah and its sages see anger as a negative, destructive force that cripples healthy psychological, familial, religious, and national development. Time and again, our sages tell us the extent to which it serves as a fundamental obstacle to authentic religious experience. It even removes spiritual gains from those who hold on to it.

Even when used for the sake of a mitzvah -- seemingly justified -- anger must be applied in only the most careful and delicate of fashions.

Given the nature of this work, we will provide only a cursory sample of the great wisdom that our Torah and its sages have to offer on the subject of anger.

Anger and Foolishness / Loss of rational self

Mishlei and Koheles, in exhortation of wisdom, repeatedly warn against the folly of anger.

אל תבהל ברוחך לכעוס כי כעס בחיק כסילים ינוח - *Do not be tumultuous in spirit to anger in the laps of the foolish rests*²¹

אֲרֶךְ אַפַּיִם רַב תְּבוּנָה וְקִצְרַר רוּחַ מְרִים אוֹלַת- *Forbearance / Patience is great understanding and temper raises simpleness*²²

טוב ארך אפים מגבור ומשל ברוחו מלכד עיר - *Good is forbearance greater than a hero and conqueror with their spirit they capture a city*²³

²¹ Koheles 7:9. Rav Moshe Tzuriel, in his fabulous two volume work, *Otzros HaMussar* (2002), *Sha'ar Haka'as* pp 711-726, writes that it is primarily a problem if the anger "rests in one's lap," but not if it is fleeting.

²² Mishlei (14:29)

²³ Mishlei (16:32)

Anger is entirely subject to the whim of one's emotions. Its opposite, ארך אפים / forbearance, is the implementation of the rational self according to one's higher will, in concert with the ways of Torah.²⁴ The folly of anger is its over-emotionality and irrationality, inevitably leading to the loss of control.

Shabbos 105b likens those who anger to idolaters. It then says, אמר רבי אבין: מאי קראה - לא יהיה בך אל זר ולא תשתחוה לאל נכר, איזהו *Rabbi Avin says*, אל זר שיש בגופו של אדם - הוי אומר זה יצר הרע "What is the intent of the verse (Tehillim 81:10), 'There shall not be within you a strange god and you shall not bow down to a foreign god?' What is a foreign God that one 'has within you?' This means to say, the yetzer hara."

Just as the yetzer hara can push someone to cross the line into idolatry, it can push them to do anything. The ultimate "foreign god" is to not be in control of oneself – and instead be controlled by the foreign and distorting influences of anger.

At the moment of anger, there is neither wisdom nor prophecy, but uncontrolled folly. It removes the rational, cognitive and spiritual gains of the person and shows them to be subject to the whims of their emotions. Nedarim 22b states it succinctly, ויאמר רבה בר רב הונא: כל הכועס - אפי' שכינה אינה חשובה כנגדו, שנאמר רשע כגובה אפו בל ידרוש אין אלהים כל מזמותיו²⁵. ר' ירמיה מדיפתי אמר: משכח תלמודו ומוסיף

²⁴ This description as well as the further discussion of anger is taken from Rabbeinu Avraham Ben HaRambam in his masterwork- Sefer HaMaspik Le'Ovdei Hashem in his chapter on ארך אפים.

²⁵ תהלים י

טיפשות, *One who is angry . . . makes his study forgotten and adds stupidity.*

Such is the automatic consequence of anger. It deprives a person, not only of his rational and cognitive faculties, but it also strips him of his intellectual and spiritual standing.

Anger and its consequences

Chazal recognized that anger has many negative consequences, physical, interpersonal, and spiritual. (In the body of this work, we will discuss the link between habitual anger and cardiovascular disease.)

Nedarim 22a says, כל הכועס כל מיני גהינם שולטין בו – *One who becomes angry, all forms of purgatory dominate him.* Aside from describing the dangers of anger in the afterlife / eschatological perspective, this statement describes anger as its own punishment and its own hell. This sense of anger as a miserable experience is true even in the here and now. One who is consumed in their anger is unable to maintain control and is controlled instead by his anger.

Similarly, and perhaps this is the very point, a person who is upset, unnerved and annoyed cannot really enjoy their life in the moment. It is not just one particular irritation, rather it is כל מיני גהינם - all types and manner of irritation.

Once the person is steeped in their anger, they become “unhinged;” everything irritates or irks them. The threshold for annoyance is lowered and one also becomes increasingly annoyed as each new situation arises.

This is akin to עבירה גוררת עבירה *Transgression leads to transgression*²⁶.

In a slightly different light, Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, provides a parable to this statement. Every person has negative and positive characteristics, similar to a barrel of wine, whose sediment is present, but has sunk to the bottom, out of view. As long as the barrel is stable, one can drink the wine, as the sediment lays isolated at the bottom. If the barrel is shaken, however, the sediment becomes displaced and the wine is no longer pleasant to drink. This is the “Gehenom” that the Talmud refers to. Normally, intellect controls us. But, when one gets angry, he loses self control. His own “inner Gehenom” then takes over. In other words, all the negative emotional sediment rises and contaminates the entire barrel.

Shabbos 105b tells us, רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר משום חילפא בר אגרא, שאמר משום רבי יוחנן בן נורי: המקרע בגדיו בחמתו, והמשבר כליו בחמתו, והמפזר מעותיו בחמתו - יהא בעיניך כעובד עבודה זרה; שכך אומנתו של יצר הרע, היום אומר לו עשה כך ולמחר אומר לו עשה כך. עד *Rabbi Shimon ben Eliezer says in the name of Chilfa bar Igra that Rabbi Yochanan ben Nuri said “One who rips clothing in his rage, breaks objects in his rage, or [spends indiscriminately] in his rage, he should appear in your eyes as an idolater. This is the skill of the yetzer hara. Today it says to do this -- and he does it. Tomorrow, it says, “Go and serve idols and he worships it.”*

²⁶ Avos 2:2

Acting on impulse and damaging things senselessly in a fit of rage is tantamount to serving idolatry. One is never permitted or excused for losing full control over his faculties. Nedarim 22b describes that for the person who is angry, the Divine Presence is not considered or valued: אמר רבה בר רב הונא: כל הכועס - אפ"י שכינה אינה חשובה כנגדו

Rabbi Chaim Vital, the most prized student of the Arizal, describes at length the dangers and sequela (pathological condition resulting from disease) of anger in his work Shaarei Kedusha.²⁷

He develops the idea of how it pushes away spiritual attainment, (as seen with Moshe Rabbeinu's forgetting halachos in the wake of having become upset at Eliezer and Itamar). He writes that his Rebbi, the Arizal, would be more careful as regards to anger than to all other averios. This held true even when the anger was in the context of a mitzvah. He would teach that one, even if one were otherwise a tzaddik, he could not hope to attain any השגה (levels of spiritual or intellectual understanding).

Anger and the family

No place is more susceptible to the expression of anger than the privacy of one's home and family. Home is the place where everyone feels they can be "themselves." And that is precisely why it is here that one's anger is most tested. It is also here where one's success will most be measured. This applies even where the anger might be a strategic: אמר רב חסדא: לעולם אל יטיל אדם אימה יתירה בתוך ביתו -- *One should never place inordinate fear within their home.* (Gittin 6b)

²⁷ Shaarei Kedusha 1:2, 6; 2:4

They further warn **הוי שפל רוח בפני כל אדם לאנשי ביתך יותר** -- *Be lowly in spirit [exceedingly humble] before all people and to the your household [i.e. wife] more than anyone else. And if you become angered and fight with your home your end will be Gehenom.*²⁸

Because everything done in the home, including how we handle our anger, serves as a model for the child's future, we must be especially vigilant.

Teaching and Anger

The passing on of the masorah of Torah cannot be done arbitrarily. The transmission must be done in the context of a special relationship, one that is free of impurities. For that reason, real anger, though easily activated when teaching, has no place in the chinuch experience.

As Hillel says in **אין הקפדן מלמד** – *One who is impatient cannot teach*²⁹. If the teacher is quick to anger, it is likely that the students will never absorb very much from him. Even when they don't understand something and would like clarification, they will be too inhibited to ask. Note that the statement- **ולא הביישן למד** - *and a bashful person will not learn* precedes **אין הקפדן מלמד** in this Mishnah.

The learning experience has to be open and comfortable (albeit with respect and awe of the material learned and its teacher).

Similarly, even though discipline is necessary, it should be seen as secondary to the goal of the positive. As the gemara describes repeatedly

²⁸ Derech erez Zuta 3, as cited by HaRav Tzurriel in Otzros HaMussar.

²⁹ Avos 2:6

in the most effective mode of communication to children- **לעולם תהא** שמאל דוחה וימין מקרבת the right arm [i.e. the strongest approach] draws close, while the left arm [i.e. a weaker approach] pushes away.³⁰ As educators, we must make sure that the message of the positive and drawing close is dominant and pushing away is not.

The obvious respect due a Rebbi and the authority he must carry does not negate the necessity of his maintaining respect for his students. R. Elazer ben Shamu's teaches יהי כבוד תלמידך חביב עליך כשלך – the honor of your student should be cherished like your own.³¹ Keeping that in mind can help the teacher guard against anger, lessening the possibility of his causing his students frustration and pain.

Where it is necessary to demonstrate anger, so as to assert authority or to teach a moral lesson, the anger must be limited to outside appearance. The teacher has to be careful to guard himself from internalizing it. The Rambam describes the need to feign anger and show it but not to actually be angry –

הכעס מדה רעה היא עד למאד וראוי לאדם שיתרחק ממנה עד הקצה האחר, וילמד עצמו שלא יכעוס ואפילו על דבר שראוי לכעוס עליו, ואם רצה להטיל אימה על בניו ובני ביתו או על הציבור אם היה פרנס ורצה לכעוס עליהן כדי שיחזרו למוטב יראה עצמו בפניהם שהוא כועס כדי לייסרם ותהיה דעתו מיושבת בינו לבין עצמו כאדם שהוא מדמה כועס בשעת כעסו והוא אינו כועס

³⁰ Sotah 47a

³¹ Avos 4:15

Anger is an exceedingly bad attribute [middah] and it is appropriate for a person to stay far away from to the furthest degree and teach himself not to become angry, even on something for which it is suitable to become angry. If [he] wants to instill trepidation in his children and those in his home or in the community if he is a communal leader and wanted to get angry in order for them to do right. He should make himself appear in front of them as if he is angry in order to teach/improve them but he should maintain his internal calmness and equanimity just as a person that he pretends to be angry but is not.³²

Anger in a Mitzvah

The desire to “do the right thing” and have others “do the right thing” can sometimes lead to what seems like justifiable and appropriate anger. One must exercise the greatest of care with this, though, as described above by R. Chaim Vital and the Rambam.

The Maggid that appeared to R. Yosef Karo warned him, “And be careful to interact with all people gently and do not get angry for any circumstance in the world. Even for the zeal of God do not be ruled by anger because this is a great rule.”

Similarly the Ramchal in Mesillas Yesharim³³ says “and even for a matter of a mitzvah, our sages warned us to not become angry -- even a teacher with his student and a father with his son. And that does not mean you should not discipline. They [the children] should be disciplined but without anger, only to guide them in the straight path. And the anger that

³² Rambam Hilchos Dei'os 2:3

³³ Mesilas Yesharim 11

he should show them should be an external anger and no anger from the heart [internal].”

One must be cognizant that episodes of anger may at times be more subtle. Even though we may not identify ourselves as idolaters or believe that we really get “all that angry,” it is worthwhile remembering that we are often not as aware of our anger as we think we are.

Interestingly, when anger is mentioned, the word לעולם or כל *frequently accompany it*: כל הכועס and כל אדם שכוועס . This highlights the fact that this is a general rule, true for everyone, and applies to all types of emotional anger.

Anger in Practice: What to Do About It

Dealing with Anger

Our Anger First

Before we adults blame children, we must first look at ourselves. This is the initial step when dealing with anger, whether it's our own or that of our children. אמר ריש לקיש: קשוט עצמך ואחר כך קשוט אחרים -- *Find yourself to be true and only then seek the truth in others*³⁴

This is essential in all situations, especially anger. By “owning” our own reactions and being consciously aware of them, we have a better chance of successfully addressing whatever situation arises. And, we stand a better chance of helping the child recover.

It is rarely effective to yell at others, especially when one does so frequently.

The goal is always to communicate. Even when trying to demonstrate annoyance, we have to be on guard to not lose ourselves. The voice of the parent or teacher who yells constantly carries little effect upon those who have heard the yelling a thousand times before. Children learn quite readily to tune it out.³⁵

³⁴ Bava Metzia 107b

³⁵ A classic comic develops this point in a poignant manner. While a mother is lecturing her child the child looks at his watch and says, “If this is a lecture, how long is this going to be?”

Practical Suggestion:

How does one convey displeasure effectively?

One possible technique is to use a 1-10 scale. Rate the intensity of the anger that you are feeling.

Let us say that “10” represents extreme anger and “1” represents slight annoyance. An educator can calmly tell a child or class, “I want you to know that this situation is really upsetting me and I feel like an 8 or a 9.”

If the teacher would merely say, “I am upset,” the class has no way of discerning just how upset the teacher is.

It goes without saying that the educator will have to explain the concept of the anger scale to the class/child beforehand – and he has to make sure that they clearly understand what the scale signifies.

The child who sees and hears an adult using the anger scale can be trained to use it as well. An educator who notices a child beginning to unravel emotionally can ask him to rate his anger. That way, at least, the child could become more aware of his vulnerable state.

Another trick is Tone of Voice (even without yelling) and body language (stance, arms folded, etc.). These can convey displeasure quite obviously and profoundly.

Feigning Anger

The Rambam says that although one should avoid becoming physically angry, it is sometimes helpful for an authority figure to feign anger, while being mindful to maintain internal calmness.³⁶

This would seem to present a challenge, given what we've previously learned from the Sefer HaChinuch: האדם נפעל לפי פעולותיו and האדם נפעל לפי מעשהו and האדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו (Mitzvoth 16, 40, 89, 264, 289, and 324). The Sefer HaChinuch says repeatedly that our emotional and spiritual state is heavily influenced and affected by our external behavior. Thus, "acting angry" has the potential of causing us to succumb to emotional anger.

It is therefore essential that a person know himself well and always be particularly mindful to maintain inner calm even when "acting angry."

It is said that Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz z"tl, the Kaminetzer Rosh Yeshiva, owned a special "anger hat" that he would don before expressing anger.

Obviously, the need to run to the closet and put on a special anger hat before allowing himself to express the anger, gave Rav Baruch Ber the time to calm down. He could then think more objectively about the situation that angered him.

³⁶ Hilchos De'os 2:3 as cited on page 49

Reciprocal inhibition

Reciprocal inhibition is a method of behavior therapy. When behavioral psychologists speak of “inhibition” in this context, they refer to the conscious exclusion of unacceptable thoughts or desires.

The rationale of this therapy is that it is impossible to simultaneously maintain two paradoxical emotions. One emotion will inevitably overpower the other.

For example, let us say that a person cannot be relaxed and anxious at the same moment. Therefore, when treating an anxiety-driven patient, a therapist might help him develop a “relaxation response” when faced with situations that had previously evoked an “anxiety response.” Since one cannot be both “relaxed” and “anxious” at the same moment, the “anxiety response” will be “inhibited” by the “relaxation response.”

The concept of reciprocal inhibition can be used by educators as well.

Let us say that a child is sitting in class and mouthing off to the teacher, acting “*chutzpadik*.” Almost certainly, the teacher will feel personally attacked and his anger level will begin to rise.

What if this was not some ordinary child, though? Suppose that this was a child who had been diagnosed with cancer and been given six weeks more to live. Knowing that, would the teacher’s attitude towards the child still be the same?

Of course not.

He would see in front of him a suffering child who could hardly be blamed for the way he expressed his pain and anxiety. The teacher’s compassion would overwhelm his anger. His personal feelings of being slighted would melt away in a moment.

What has happened is that feelings of compassion, the “compassion response,” have “inhibited” the “anger response.”

This is something that could be applied to other cases as well, not just the very dramatic ones where the teacher is responding to a child with terminal illness.

We know that a child’s chutzpah is merely a cover for some inner turmoil. If a teacher were to remember this when confronted with disrespectful outbursts, he might be able to better remove himself emotionally. He can then view the child’s disrespect as a sad manifestation of inner turmoil -- and not merely as a challenge to the teacher’s authority based on nothing other than a desire to do mischief.

Of course, teachers already know this, deep down. Their challenge is to remind themselves of this in “the heat of the moment”, so that they respond constructively rather than with emotional anger.

This does not mean that chutzpah should be ignored. But the teacher’s reaction must be as rational as possible.

One key is: **Don’t take it personally!**

Be objective! View the issue in a logical manner. Don’t let yourself be influenced by personal emotions and feelings.³⁷

³⁷ Occasionally, when children go off the derech r”l, the parents cry, “How could he do this to me?” This question often adds to the frustration of the child who asserts that throughout his life he didn’t feel like anyone truly cared about him and his feelings. When a child leaves the fold r”l, he inevitably will be hurting his parents and causing them untold suffering, but generally that is not his objective. In fact, many of these troubled children complain, “What about me? What about my feelings? Even when I go off the derech, your concern is about how I could do this to you. What about asking how could I do this to me?! Don’t you think that I am suffering terrible pain inside if I was able to turn my back on everyone and everything that I grew up with?!”

Speak gently while maintaining firmness³⁸

Educators: When feeling frustrated or becoming upset, *instead of raising your voice, lower it!*

When students see their teacher standing with a grim face, their curiosity is sparked. As long as even a few students notice that the teacher is still in the room with them and is now saying something, they will begin to quiet their classmates.

A lowered tone has a soothing and quieting effect. Screaming only adds to the noise level.

Trying to “out-scream” a class full of students is counterproductive. There comes a point where the screaming match reaches its peak. What will the teacher do then? Throw a desk?

The lowered voice creates that same effect as the raised one, albeit in a far more positive and exemplary manner.

This is reminiscent of Mishlei 15:1, “שׁוֹבֵב רֵךְ מֵעֵנָה – A soft word turns away anger.” Speaking softly is not only important in order to help us maintain our own composure, but also to prevent us from igniting the anger of the person that our words are directed at.

Of course, if an educator hardly ever raises his voice, during the rare occasions when he does so it will generally have the desired effect. Because it is so unusual, the raised voice will immediately capture attention.

³⁸ As the Ramban writes in his timeless letter that always speaking gently will save a person from anger (see above p. 41). This surely includes children and students.

One of my elementary school Rabbeim never raised his voice all year, except on one occasion. A group of boys were poking fun at a yid from a different religious background who had come to our door.

After the man left, my Rebbe screamed at us about the need to respect all Jews. He obviously felt that our behavior warranted severe chastisement.

Because it was the only time he raised his voice all year, I vividly remember it even now.

Reacting to Chutzpa

“You sound very upset right now. We can discuss your frustration privately, but we are not allowed to ever talk that way to a Rebbe or teacher. What you did was very serious. I am not sure what to do about it right now. I’ll have to think about it and get back to you later.”

The educator has just bought himself time. While the child is pondering the situation and worrying about what the consequences will be, the teacher has the freedom to think the matter over as well. He now has the time to try and come up with the most effective response possible.

Meanwhile, the child can sit and fret because the consequence has not yet been determined. And, he is unable to exacerbate the situation by arguing whether the punishment is “fair.”

In fact, this technique, which allows the child and the onlookers to see the disappointment and disapproval of the Rebbe/teacher without an immediate negative emotional reaction, sends an extremely powerful positive message.

Chazal (Yoma 23a) discuss the virtue of *הנעלבין ואינן עולבין, שומעין, שומעין*, -- *Insulted, but do not retaliate, who hear themselves humiliated and do not respond*. Concerning such an individual, the Navi says (Shoftim 5:31), *ואהביו כצאת השמש בגברתו*, -- *But they that love Him, are*

as the sun when it goes forth in its might. Chazal are telling us that one who holds back from responding to others who denigrate him is analogous to the sun which nurtures all of mankind.

When a student is chutzpadik in front of an entire class, it is inevitable that the educator feels somewhat angry or hurt. Any response that he/she offers in the heat of the moment will almost definitely not be optimal for the child's (or the class's) long-term growth.

An educator who is able to swallow his/her pride and not respond to a child's overt chutzpah surely falls into the category of הנעלבין ואינן עולבין. The lesson that the rest of the class learns from the educator's response is far more potent than any retaliatory remark or screaming match.

In fact, if a child's chutzpah is indeed rooted in some sort of negative pathology, a strong condescending response will only further his negative feelings. An angry punitive response will, at best, offer a short term resolution. However, at the same time it sends a covert message to all spectators (i.e. the class) that when someone attacks you verbally, getting angry or losing control is a normal appropriate response.

It is also important to realize that when an educator lashes out at a child and responds with overt anger, the child's focus shifts from the issue at hand to the educator's anger being directed at him. It is always more powerful and effective to address the child with a feeling of sadness, as opposed to anger.

Recently, a relative received a warning letter from his building complex's management office. The letter stated that because the relative had failed to comply with an earlier warning letter, he now had three days to clear certain objects from the vicinity of his apartment. If he failed to comply within that time, they would be discarded.

He knew that the managers were justified in sending the letter. Still, the strong words immediately sent a wave of anger tricking through his body.

His first thought was to take the objects and dump them at the management's door. "Let them deal with it!"

Upon reflection, he was surprised that he had reacted so immaturely. But, he realized that it was human nature. We don't react well to anger and threats. Whenever we feel that we are being dealt with harshly, our initial response is to figure out how to retaliate.

Addressing the child's anger

Our goal is not to repress or destroy angry feelings in children or in ourselves. Rather, it is to accept the feelings and help channel them to constructive ends.

Children must be allowed to "feel" whatever they are "feeling." However, adults can help direct them towards showing them acceptable ways of expressing those feelings.

Angry outbursts should not always be viewed as a sign of serious problems; they should be recognized and treated with respect.³⁹

Our job is to *understand* the child, not necessarily to *fix* the child and his situation. It's unlikely that we will be able to fix the child's

³⁹ Some intense anger must, however, be viewed as pathological and mental health professionals should be consulted.

anger.⁴⁰ However, once we are able to get him to discuss the anger, our primary goal is to *listen* – not to try and reason!

Don't discount the child's feelings. Even if his anger is directed at the educator, the educator should demonstrate his willingness to listen the child openly. Otherwise, the child will not feel comfortable relating his feelings at a future time.

“It sounds like you get mad when I give pop-up quizzes. Thanks for sharing that with me. I’ll give it some thought. I use those quizzes to assess how everyone understands the material but perhaps I can make them worth less on the report card.”

Gemara (Eiruvin 65b) “בשלשה דברים אדם ניכר בכוסו בכיסו ובכעסו” - *In three ways one can recognize (the true essence of) a person: When he is inebriated, when he is dealing with his finances, and when he is angry.”*

We see that Chazal draw a correlation between drunkenness and extreme anger. It is obvious that one does not reason with a drunk. If an inebriated person asserts that he can fly, one doesn't try and reason with him. He gives him a coffee and puts him to bed. When he sobers up the next morning then he can deal with his excessive drinking.

A person who has lost his temper must be viewed in the same manner; he is as good as drunk. Even if a person is angry but not “off the handle,” there is a limit to how much insight and teaching the child can accept and hear at that time. Never reason with an angry child; it will only fuel his anger. Rather say, “It sounds like you're really mad. I would really

⁴⁰ A child who comes to school angry may be upset about things that occurred at home. Often there is little or nothing a school can do about such things. Still, listening empathetically can at least validate a child's feelings and show care for his feelings.

like to listen to you and to try to understand what you're upset about. Come back when your voice is as calm as mine."

We often try to offer solutions for our children's anger in order to band-aid the problem. We do this out of the sincere goodness of our heart to ensure that our children live worry-free lives. However, the child views it as a lack of sensitivity and concern for his feelings and his pain.

Aryeh comes home hurt and angry that he wasn't chosen for the baseball team when all his friends were. His father smiles and says, "Oh come on Aryeh, those leagues are silly. You never liked them and you didn't really want to play with them anyway. I'll play baseball with you every Sunday, okay?"

It is vital that we listen to the child and respect his feelings. This is accomplished through non-judgmental empathetic listening. Even if we do not agree with the child, we still need to respect the fact that the child is very bothered or hurt by what has occurred.

No one appreciates being told that his frustrations are baseless and silly.

A man comes home from work irate that he got a ticket for speeding. His wife immediately launches into a harangue about his terrible driving habits and how she is always warning him to slow down. We can be sure that next time something upsetting occurs he will be hesitant to tell her.

A child who gets lectured or preached to when he expresses his anger or pain will learn to bottle them up or to express them somewhere else. If a child comes home angry that he was kicked out of class, and our immediate reaction is to side with the teacher, he will not want to discuss it with us next time. Then, when we ask him how his day was and he

nonchalantly shrugs and says “it was fine,” we will be frustrated that he doesn’t want to tell us anything.

If we listen quietly to the child’s side of the story and, only later (perhaps a few hours later) re-discuss it calmly, the child will be more receptive since he knows that his feelings and frustrations were respected. If the child’s feelings are consistently not addressed, or if he feels that nobody understands him, it could lead to other non-desirable consequences as well.

Often, a child who acts negatively is doing so because it’s the only reaction he knows. He may be lacking vital social skills. Young children often understand very little about how their behavior affects others. It is often necessary to be explicit, giving examples of what the appropriate response should have been. Obviously, the examples have to be the type that this particular child can relate to and realistically acquire. Simply telling him, “Calm down!” will only further his frustration and anger.⁴¹

⁴¹ Teachers and therapists need to help the aggressive child express the vulnerable part that has been hurt by others to break through the outer mask of toughness and defiance. The child who bullies often wants to be listened to and understood, but he does not know how to ask for it. He only knows that his intimidation affects others and he gets what he wants. The submissiveness of others gives him power that substitute for the love he craves. His rage helps him momentarily ventilate the unresolved hurt and shame inside.

Shame or the internal global belief of "I am bad." is thought to be the mechanism that keeps the child caught in “acting out” behavior. Shame blocks positive information from coming in. The child feels bad about his explosive outbursts that give him the attention that he cannot get from achievement and friendships. The aggressive child desires affection, but is afraid of being swallowed up and depleted by others. He has the mistaken belief that intimacy represents being controlled by others. He learns to substitute enjoyment of hurting others for friendship. It is paradoxical that his anger keeps intimacy away and denies that one thing that the person desires the most is to be loved. The ability to accept kindness and love from someone is a skill that the child has missed out on. The basic skill deficit of the antisocial child is trust of others.

Be a record player but don't get drunk!

When a child is angry, acknowledge and recognize the anger, but do not allow yourself to become enmeshed in his anger. Once the child successfully provokes the educator to anger and he becomes emotionally involved, he will be ineffective. In fact, the educator will probably exacerbate the situation. *If we get drunk in anger than we have to step back too!*

Corporal punishment during a blowup is ineffective. Research and experience shows that it generally backfires and can ultimately cause greater resentment and anger. At the time of the outburst, the educator must seek a way to allow the child to back out of his anger. Physical punishment just serve to increase a power struggle. Disciplining will be appropriate at a later point, but not during the height of the anger.

Good discipline includes creating an atmosphere of quiet firmness, clarity, and conscientiousness, while using reasoning. Bad discipline involves punishment that is unduly harsh and inappropriate. It often includes verbal ridicule and attacks on the child's integrity.

Punishment for an angry outburst may serve to *temporarily* suppress anger, but it surely does not teach a child how he should react to his anger *in the future*, unless it is revisited and discussed later.

Avromi took Nachman's ball away and ran out of the room.

Nachman chased Avromi, grabbed the ball out of Avromi's hand, and smacked Avromi across the face.

Nachman's mother immediately sent him to his room.

If Nachman's mother does not eventually discuss with him what occurred, Nachman will not know what to do with his anger the next time someone takes his ball. In fact, in his mind, he may feel tremendous resentment against the injustice of someone taking away his ball and being exonerated while he was sent to his room.

When a child is angry, it can also be helpful to change his environment. If the stimulus which angered him is nearby he may need a break from it so that he can calm down. Additionally, he may need a few minutes just to relax and gather his bearings.

A talmid who, grew up in the home of Chofetz Chaim. Rabbi Levine would relate that people are under the impression that the Chofetz Chaim was a completely relaxed person who could never become angry. However, the truth is that he was a Kohain, who are characteristically known to have tempers. His greatness was not that he never felt a trace of anger, but that he had complete control over it.

Whenever the Chofetz Chaim felt that he was becoming the least bit angry, he would excuse himself. He would walk away from what was angering him and would literally talk to himself. "Yisroel Meir, why are you becoming angry? Yisroel Meir calm yourself lest you become angry and have to go to Gehenom! . . ."

Only when he felt calm did he return. At times, he would excuse himself repeatedly each time he felt a trace of anger welling up within him.⁴²

⁴²A student also related that the Chofetz Chaim would stay late at night in Bais Medrash. One night, the student hid in the women's section to see watch the Chofetz Chaim. At midnight he watched as the Chofetz Chaim opened the Aron kodesh and said, "Ribbono shel olam, Yisroel Meir is a kohain. Help me not lose my temper."

The educator must try to give the child an escape route to calm down safely. Allow him to walk out, put his head down, etc. Above all, we must seek to *preserve the dignity of the child*.

It is well known that the best defense is a good offense. The best time to educate and help a child deal with his anger is when things are calm and relaxed. When the child is completely rational and level-headed, we stand a greater chance of engaging him in meaningful discourse.

One of the most important steps involved in helping someone change a negative character trait is to give him hope and encouragement.

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter z"tl (who did not use hyperbole), once commented that it is easier to learn all of Shas than it is to change one negative character trait. A person who is undertaking change must realize that it is an arduous and frustrating road. He will inevitably have failures and setbacks, but persistence generally pays off. He cannot be allowed to think, "That's just the way I am, and there's nothing I can do about it." We must convey to him that, ultimately, he is in charge of his own behavior and his own responses.

Although people often say, "Well, he *made* me angry," the truth is that a person is never forced to lose his temper. Between every provoking situation and outcome lies the freedom to select our actions. Habit may make our responses seem almost involuntary, but the moment of choice still exists.

The first step to overcoming feelings of anger is to acknowledge that we have the power to respond to challenges with either love and understanding or anger and frustration. Becoming angry is a conscious

choice, a decision. We can make the choice not to become angry. We choose!⁴³

Facilitating Discussion about Anger

(For both group and individual settings.)

[See appendices for specific examples, from real-life situations.]⁴⁴

How to Notice the Anger – Ask: “What somatic (bodily) changes occur in your body when you get angry?”

The body responds to anger in many different ways. The face can become red, breathing can become more rapid, the heart beats faster, palms become sweaty, hands and feet feel tight, and teeth clench. Other common responses are a surge of energy (adrenaline), ears turning purplish red, the eyebrows look downward (frown), and the nose flares. Others experience a feeling of tightness in the abdomen, their body feels sweaty, and their mind starts racing.

Help him identify Anger Signs. How does he react when an anger trigger is pulled? Does he feel hot or flushed? Does his heart pound? Does he breathe more rapidly? Do his neck muscles tense up?

A child can also have anger triggers in his thoughts. Examples include feelings of unfairness: “Someone is out to get me!” “Nobody understands how hard it is for me!” “It’s my way or not at all!” “If other

⁴³ In a letter to the authors Rav Dovid Cohen, שליט”א wrote, “*I maintain that one should not teach middos with an approach of “overkill”, i.e. that, “when we get angry we must know that there is something missing from our emunah”. Rather, that everything is dependent on one’s level and each individual must chart his/her course in overcoming מעגלות מעגלות but one shouldn’t foster any kind of guilt due to failure.*”

⁴⁴ These ideas are adapted from the Social Skills group about anger with the fifth grade in Bais Hachinuch.

people would change, then there would not be a problem!” “Everybody is against me!” “This is not fair!”

When he has such thoughts, he should realize that his lava level is rising.

He may feel a desire to threaten, hit or slap, scream, or act out. It is also important to notice signs of suppressed anger, such as sarcasm, feelings of frustration, or a desire to get even.

Some children may have learned to deny their feelings of anger or to act as if they don't matter. To them, this kind of introspection can be uncomfortable.

There are different **levels of anger**. It is important to know how to differentiate between being upset or annoyed versus being infuriated or livid.

Therefore, it is important to help children develop a decent emotion vocabulary. This is not only true in regard to synonyms for anger but for all emotions.

Sometimes, when a child is nervous about something, he feels himself experiencing the same kind of bodily symptoms he experiences when angry. If he does not know how to define the emotion, he may mistakenly believe that he must be angry – and state this. That is because his emotional vocabulary is limited and “anger” is the name of the emotion that he associates those symptoms with.

When a person thinks he is angry, even if he isn't, he will act accordingly and will truly become angry.

When a child is aware of different emotions and he is able to identify them and how they manifest themselves in his body, he will be better able to handle them.

Using a **scale** as manner to tangibly measure anger level can be very helpful. We suggest using a diagram of a volcano. After explaining the analogy of anger to a volcano, we explain how a volcano works. This includes a detailed explanation of how lava rising within a volcano is similar to our own feelings of anger inside our heart. If the anger is not dealt with in a proper manner, then, like the volcano, we can explode and act inappropriately, hurting people verbally and physically. Losing one's temper is analogous to an erupting volcano which spews noxious lava, rapidly flowing in all directions, instantly wreaking damage and destruction upon everything it touches. There is no way to survive a volcano once it erupts except to get out of its way.

Once a child understands the analogy we can ask him what his anger level is in various situations. This can help him realize when he is beginning to unravel and may need to utilize one of the calming techniques.

The best way to work on anger management is to try and understand the causes and the course of anger. That way, one has a better chance of controlling his anger before it gets out of hand.

Triggers

No one can force us to become angry or express anger in destructive ways. However, certain **triggers** make us more susceptible. A child's anger might be triggered when an educator ignores the good things he does, when a friend puts him down, or when someone takes something from him without asking. Obviously, it is very helpful to the child for him to learn to recognize these things about himself.

Some people find it helpful to make a list. They can then spend some time thinking about how to react more positively the next time the trigger gets pulled. The list might include not just the triggers, but the coping strategies as well.

It is also helpful to role-play various situations that include some of his triggers. Then, help him to act out a new response.

- **First Response is: Be Calm**

Tell the child that the first thing he needs to do is to calm down. Discuss different calming methods with him. Allow him to choose which options sound most helpful.

- **See Another Viewpoint**

Help the child to realize that the other person might not have meant any harm in what he was doing. Help him to understand that the other person might have been tired or overstressed. Perhaps, the remark or action that seemed so cruel was actually done totally without malice.

Angry reactions – especially among children - are often based on misinterpretation. An important component of anger management is to learn just how to “stand inside of someone else’s shoes,” to view things from the vantage point of someone else.

- **Let Him See What He Himself Looks Like**

With some children, it can be fun to tell them to make the angriest face they can. Then, have them walk over to the mirror and look at their reflection. After the child finishes laughing, ask him if he thought he looked silly. Then tell them (with a smile), “Well, that’s what you look like when you get very angry!”

- **Gedolim Stories – About Oneself**

Have the child write his own “gedolim stories!”

He should keep a written record of the occasions when, despite the presence of anger triggers, he managed to restrain himself. As he reads his own personal accounts it will give him hope and encouragement to continue, despite the occasional (or frequent!) failures.

Characterological anger

Some people mistakenly think that their anger issues will work themselves out over a matter of time, without their being addressed in any manner, shape, or form. In truth, the longer one allows *any* negative character trait to fester and surface uninhibitedly, the worse the damage will be as time goes on. Once the person does come around to working on it, the harder it is going to be to treat, given that it has become so ingrained.

Characterological anger affects one socially and can cost him his job. Children with this type of anger need to be treated. They must be told that extreme anger problems can destroy friendships, marriages, and hurt their families and children in terrible ways. It will not simply disappear as they mature. They will not “grow out of it.”

Managing Anger Prior/During a Blow-up

“When lava is rising up the volcano or overflowing down the volcano”

It is important to help attune the child to the fact that he is becoming angry. One way of doing this is to identify and name the emotion. For example, “I see you’re getting upset about this”.

Once the child realizes that his ‘lava level’ is rising, he can be mindful of his temper. Then, he can work on calming himself down. Prevention is the best antidote for any problem.

[This is also a good time for an educator to remind himself to maintain his own composure. *“The child is not my enemy; he is angry and may say things he doesn’t mean. If I allow myself to become angry and get dragged in to an emotional exchange this will be a negative experience for both of us.”*]

Following are some suggestions of possible calming or diversion techniques that the child may find beneficial.⁴⁵

- **Take three deep breaths**

When one is angry, his body becomes tense. Breathing deeply will ease the tension and help lower the internal anger level.

- **Change your environment**

The quickest way to uncouple one’s self from an ongoing source of anger is to take a five-minute walk. Get some fresh air. If the child is sitting on a bus, he can use a “mental escape” by reading a book or talking to someone else.

⁴⁵ It goes without saying that every individual should choose the techniques best-suited to himself. What works for one person may be ineffective or harmful for another.

- **Know why you feel angry**

Track down the clues about the kinds of things, situations, people, and events that triggered the anger. Anger often masks deep fears or other negative feelings. In an angry-making situation, it is helpful to probe what emotions have caused the anger.

- **Let go of what is beyond your control**

One can change only himself and his responses to others, not what others do to him. Getting angry doesn't fix the situation. It only makes a person feel worse. If someone constantly arouses your child's anger, help him focus on the troublesome situation and brainstorm solutions with him.

- **Express yourself**

Help the child think and use measured tones and words that are not emotionally loaded. Let him state that he is angry and let him identify the situation that made him angry and why. Of course, this should be non-confrontational.

- **Remember to be cautious**

There are situations in which expressing anger holds danger. It is better to first discuss or vent about the situation with a friend instead of the aggressor.

- **Be assertive, not aggressive, in expressing yourself**

Assertiveness requires speaking in an effective, nonviolent way towards a constructive goal. It may help to rehearse a response before delivering it.

- **Make positive statements**

Memorize a few positive statements to say to yourself when your anger is triggered. They will head off a knee-jerk

reaction. For example, say, “I can take care of my own needs” or “His needs are just as important as mine” or “I am able to make good choices.”

- **Physical exercise can help quell an overactive fight or flight response**

Physiologically, anger is a “fight or flight” response to stressors or threats. These stressors might be real (two boys get into a fight) or perceived (one child fears that another will challenge him to fight). Neither the body nor the mind discriminates between the two.

It is understood that there are two categories of brain activity. The more primitive areas govern involuntary functions such as breathing, heart rate, and large muscle response. The higher order areas control forethought, decision-making, and planning.

Research has shown that the more that the primitive areas are stimulated, the lower the activity level in the higher order areas of forethought, etc.

One term for this is “the fight or flight response.”

It appears to be the body's natural reaction to a stressor or threat. This is why “anger makes you stupid.”

When we get angry, we do things we wouldn't ordinarily do and say things we wouldn't ordinarily say.

Perhaps the simplest, best way to turn down the activity of our fight or flight response is by physical exercise. The natural conclusion of fight or flight is vigorous physical activity. When we

exercise, we metabolize excessive stress hormones—restoring our body and mind to a calmer, more relaxed state.

Any form of activity where we "work up a sweat" for five minutes will effectively metabolize off — and prevent the excessive buildup of — stress hormones. By exercising to the point of sweating, we effectively counteract the ill effects of the fight of flight response, drawing it to its natural conclusion. Exercise increases our natural endorphins, which help us to feel better. When we feel good, our thoughts are clearer, our positive beliefs are more accessible and our perceptions are more open. When we feel tired and physically run down, we tend to focus on what's not working in our lives—similar to a cranky child needing a nap.

It is difficult to act, feel, or think positive when we are exhausted, sleep deprived or physically out of condition.

- **Relaxation**

The physiological opposite of the "fight or flight" response is the relaxation response. The relaxation response lowers blood pressure, slows heart rate and breathing, and decreases muscle tension. Because it is not automatic, the relaxation response must consciously be elicited. One way to do this is simply to focusing on the rhythm of one's breathing. Focusing on breathing can automatically slow down your body.

Most of us breathe using upper chest breathing. Deep breathing entails inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. To help a child learn deep breathing, tell him to place his right hand on his abdomen. Then ask him to inhale. As he does

so, his abdomen should distend -- like a balloon inflating. As he exhales, his abdomen should go down -- like a balloon deflating.⁴⁶

Because we are so used to shallow chest breathing, the deep breathing may feel extremely unnatural at first. If a child is having problems with the technique, try the following: Ask him to lay flat on the floor and place a phone book on his belly. As he inhales, he should see the phone book should go up, and as he exhales, the phone book should go down.

Deep breathing helps physiologically because it helps compensate for the oxygen surplus created when the body goes into “fight or flight” mode. (The rapid, shallow breathing, or hyperventilation, that characterizes “fight or flight” causes the body to overload on oxygen. The deep breathing restores the normal balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide.)

- **Have him Draw a Picture**

Tell the young, angry child to draw a picture that describes his feelings. This is a highly-effective and healthy way for him to vent his feelings. The child gets to vent – and no one (neither the child nor anyone else) gets hurt in the process!

After the child is finished, ask him to explain what he drew. Listen non-judgmentally. Be prepared, for the picture you see may very well be somewhat harsh.

Often, by the time the child finishes the picture, he will have completely calmed down. However, it is still important to

⁴⁶ Square Breathing is a similar form of deep breathing and can be used effectively. It works by breathing through the nose to the count of 4, holding it for 4, and releasing the breath slowly through pursued lips to the count of 4.

discuss the picture with the child in order to identify the source of the child's anger for the future.

I remember watching a second grader who had a hard time expressing his emotions in middle of a complete melt down. The principal took out crayons and big piece of paper and told him to draw his feelings. I came back a few minutes later and was surprised to see that he had drawn a mean picture but was now completely relaxed and was drawing little houses while smiling and talking calmly.

- **Cathartic Release**

Another technique is Cathartic Release. This means that one allows the child (or adult) to release his anger in a safe way (even if he is raging), as long as he does not hurt anyone else.⁴⁷

We hesitate to recommend this approach, as it doesn't seem to help in the long run. It doesn't teach the person how to properly manage their anger. Several recent studies found that simple "catharsis" or expression of the anger by aggression (e.g. hitting a punching bag) may increase the frequency or desire to aggression rather than decrease it.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ There is a marketed product called the "Customized Anger Management Pillowcase". It displays the photo of a person that someone may feel extreme anger towards. Whenever one feels angry at the person, he is encouraged to punch the pillow as hard as he could until he feels calm.

⁴⁸ Of course, one might ask whether cathartic release is much different than physical exercise. The difference would seem to be that when one is angry, there is still a cognitive thought process. Otherwise, the person would be completely out of control. Even though he is very angry, his mind is still working. This ensures him that he is reacting to his anger in a constructive manner.

When he throws something, he is committing a damaging action. When he exercises, he is doing something that releases energy productively. He is dealing with his anger in an appropriate manner.

To just punch at a bag or throw something may get rid of the energy, but it is not helping him restructure the anger and figure out how he is going to get back to a level of

It is also vital that **limits** are set. Although we must give extra “space” to an angry child, there are lines that he may not cross, no matter how angry he/she is. “I see you’re angry, but what you are doing cannot be tolerated.”

We may not be able to stop the child from his inappropriate behavior right now, but the behavior must be protested nonetheless. Both the audience and the child must know that this behavior is over the line.

Threatening during an outburst is ineffective; in fact it will end up being counterproductive. A threat of punishment generally works because, upon hearing a threat, a child will rationally think that he doesn’t want to suffer the punishment. Therefore, he is motivated to do as he was told. But if a child is in the middle of having a complete breakdown, he is being completely irrational. He is acting almost completely based on his intense emotions. At such a time, a threat will only serve to exasperate the situation. However, at a later time, consequences could and should be enforced.

It is also important for an educator to **limit** his words at time of anger. Avos 4:18 instructs, אל תרצה את חברך בשעת כעסו - *Do not seek to appease your friend during his time of anger*. Any person in a fit of rage cannot listen to or accept rational arguments.

equilibrium that will enable him to deal with the situation rationally next time an anger episode occurs (and there doesn’t seem to be a non-human punching bag available).

After The Anger Episode

We have repeatedly stressed that anger management can only be taught in moments of calm. Generally, the best time to educate is soon after a blow-up has occurred, but after tempers have cooled.

Post-Management includes **revisiting**, **reflecting**, and **reevaluating** what occurred. It is also important to discuss what alternate responses the child could have had when he was angered. This is known as **solution talk**.

When discussing a “blowup” with a child, **clarify** that the purpose of the discussion is to learn from the experience. The child must realize that it is not a discipline session (although consequences may be necessary afterwards).

In order to foster discussion and positive communication, it is vital to understand and clarify both sides of a fight non-judgmentally. Empathize before seeking to deal with the situation. Otherwise, next time there is an issue, the child will not want to speak with you about it.

It may be prudent for an educator to first speak to those involved in a fight separately in order to hear both sides of the story privately. At that time, the educator can notify both parties that they will afterwards be called into the room together to openly discuss what occurred. When they are together the educator can facilitate open discussion, presenting both sides and then allowing them to speak to each other.

Kalman is a bully who often verbally lashes out at other boys with a barrage of nasty invective. When he got into a fight with another hot-tempered boy, I called Kalman in first to hear his side of the story. I offered him a candy if he could sit in the room with the other boy and not say one word to him while he said his side of the story. It was very challenging for Kalman but he did it and we were able to work out the

issues, without Kalman making additional comments that would escalate the fight. Both boys walked out calmly and peacefully.

Our goal is not to eliminate anger but to learn how to **deal with it** effectively. This point should be clarified to the child as well. Life presents us with trying, angering situations. That is reality. Our goal is to learn how to keep our anger under control and be able to be productive even in trying situations. That holds true even for those for whom it presents the greatest challenge, like those with characterological anger.

Using some form of **Anger Log** can be helpful. It keeps a running record of blowups. It is also a very helpful tool to help a child reflect on what occurred. (See Resources for sample Log.)

The log addresses the following questions: What happened? What was your trigger? How angry were you? (Can point out level on the ‘Volcano diagram’) How did you handle your anger?

The log help raise the child’s awareness about anger in general, and particularly to his own reactions and triggers. With time the child also learns to **identify** and be in touch with his feelings constantly. The more a person is aware of his mood, the easier it is for him to learn to control himself.

It is also important to **assess** the child’s interpretation of the event. Often there are cognitive distortions, i.e. misunderstandings that the child has about what occurred which caused the whole event to flare up in the first place.

When discussing events with a child it is helpful to ask the child to see what transpired from the **other person’s vantage point**. If he says, “I am 100% sure that the other kid was trying to hurt me and there’s no

other explanation,” we can say to the child, “I’ll give you a dollar (or a candy, etc.) if you can give me a logical rational explanation of why the other kid may have done it and not to hurt you.”

With a young child we can say, “Imagine if we had an x-ray machine that could go into other person’s mind. What would it tell us about this fight? What was the other person thinking? How angry was he? What is the other side of the story?”

Children (as well as adults) often do not realize how hurtful their words or actions are to someone else. This remains true even if they have been subjected to that very same pain themselves. Autistic children are especially affected and handicapped in this regard.

Children often think that anger ‘just happened’. We hope that the ideas described in this book might be useful in helping them recognize that, in fact, there was a process involved. The anger did not “just happen.”

The child should **evaluate** what occurred. “How did you handle the situation?” Children often view fights as an occurrence that happened in isolation. The child must realize that the event was probably part of a bigger picture. Has this been an issue that was festering? Were there any warning signs that this could happen? Help the child reflect, “Did you handle yourself well? What will you do if the situation arises again?”

REPRODUCIBLE HANDOUTS

**TEACHING CHILDREN
ANGER
MANAGEMENT**

Including “Quick Tips” for educators



**Dr. Yitzchak Schechter, PsyD
Rabbi Doniel Staum, LMSW**

SAFE WAYS TO HANDLE



ANGER



- Take some time to relax
 - Count to ten. Take three deep breaths.
- Walk away from the problem
 - Go to a safe place where you can calm down.
- Run and play
 - Exercise and/or have fun
- Put your feelings on paper. Draw and color.
 - Make angry pictures that describe how you feel.
- Use humor. Make a joke out of it.
 - Laugh at yourself.
- No big deal. Work it out in your mind.
 - Decide if the problem is worth getting upset about.
- Talk it out. Use “I” messages
 - Discuss how you feel.
- Say you are Sorry and make-up.
 - Only do this if you really mean it.
- Ask a grown-up or good friend for help.
 - Ask someone you feel comfortable with for advice.

○

WHY DO I GET ANGRY?

- Someone annoys me
- Someone takes something of mine
- Someone fights with me
- I get out while playing a game
- I lose a game
- Someone makes fun of me
- Someone hurts my feelings
- Someone embarrasses me
- Someone insults my friend
- Someone physically hurts me
- Someone messes up my stuff
- Someone falsely accuses me
- Someone plays a not nice trick
- I feel very stressed out
- Something happened that upset me
- I am upset at myself!!!





ANGER WORDS

UPSET
MAD
LIVID
FUMING
ANNOYED
FURIOUS
DISTRESSED
IRRITATED
IRATE
FURIOUS
INCENSED
ENRAGED
OUTRAGED
FRUSTRATED
AGGRAVATED
INFURIATED

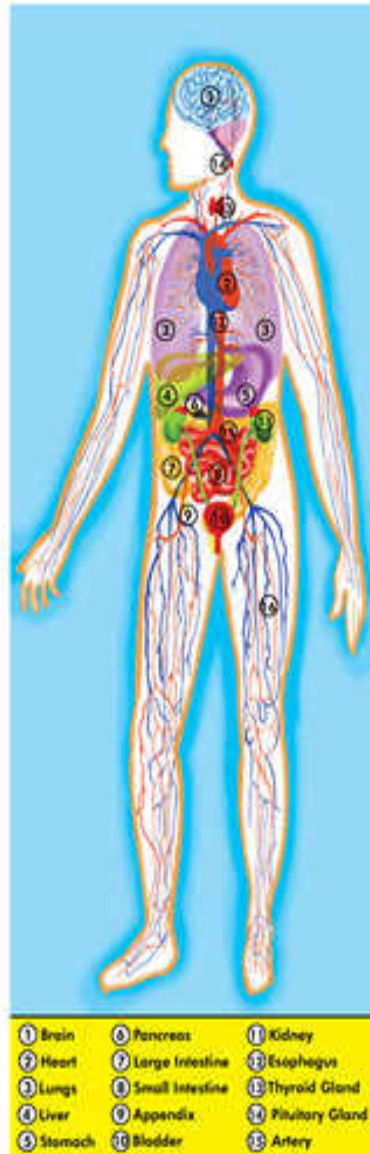


CALM WORDS

CALM
TRANQUIL
PEACEFUL
SOOTHED
RELAXED
QUIET
UNPERTURBED
COOL
COMPOSED
SERENE
RESTED
COMFORTABLE
COLLECTED



Circle the parts of the body that change when you become angry and write how they change.



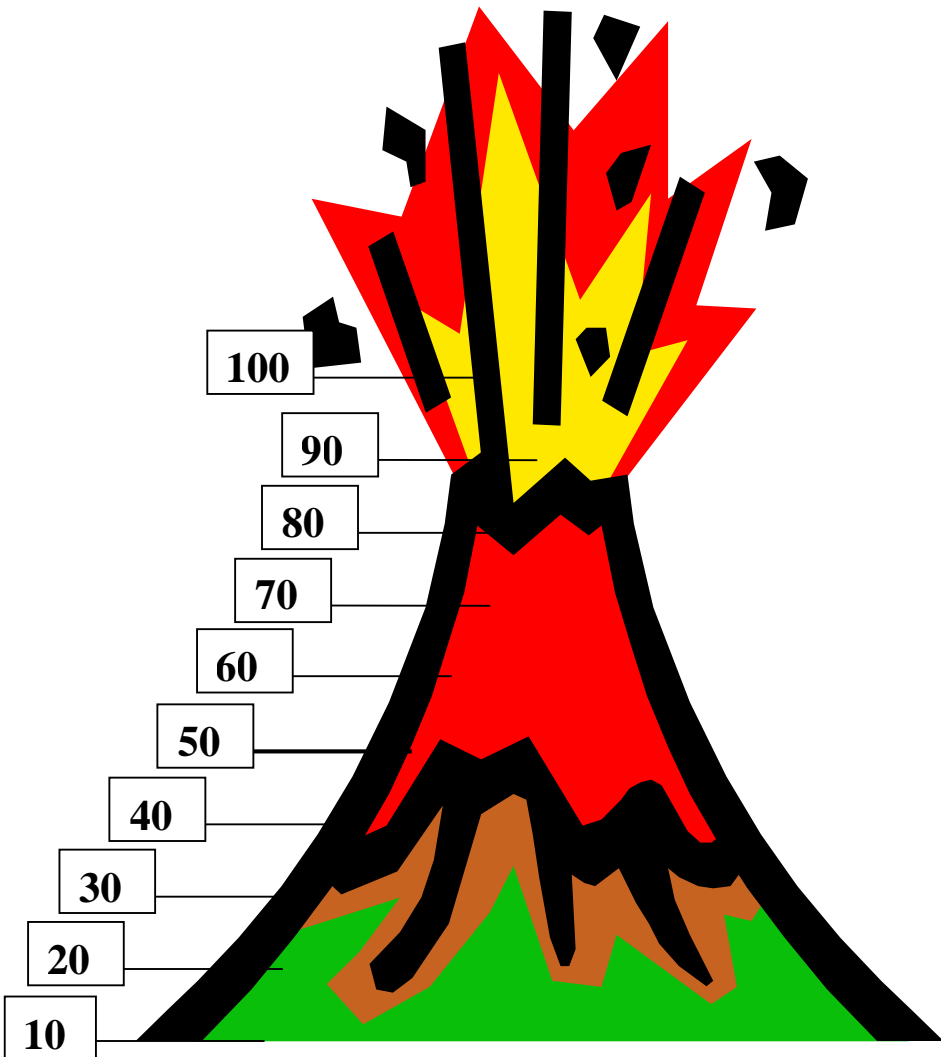
VOLCANO –ANGER- SCALE

It is helpful to think of anger as a big volcano with lava rising inside.

Mark off where on the volcano you feel like your “lava level” is.

Then mark off how high you feel it goes when someone bothers you?

How about when you get a bad mark on a test?



FOUR THINGS THAT HAPPEN TO US WHEN WE GET ANGRY

1. “Anger glasses”



We see everything in an angry way.

2. “Fixed Thinking”



We are sure that we are right. We also have a hard time thinking about the other person’s side of the story.

3. “Increased impulsivity”




We are even more impulsive (quick to act without thinking).

4. “Irrational Thinking”



We don’t think clearly. The biggest challenge is that we usually think we ARE thinking clearly and that the way we are behaving makes sense!

POINTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT ANGER

1. Everyone gets angry sometimes. You are not a bad person. 

2. When you are tired or sick you are quicker to get angry.





3. Don't pretend like everything is fine if it isn't. 


4. Anger gets worse with time if it is not dealt with.


5. The best way to control anger is to not allow it to start.





6. You may hurt yourselves and/or others when you are angry. 

7. The anger is yours. You – and you alone- choose your reaction. 

8. There will be consequences (not necessarily punishments) for our actions. 

9. Review your choices and decide what you can do. 

10. Speaking out your anger with someone you trust can be very helpful. 

11. Often, we feel sad after we feel angry, because we are embarrassed or sad about how we acted while we were angry. 

DEALING WITH *OTHER PEOPLE'S* ANGER

- Don't get them angrier or make it worse
 - *Remember that when someone is very angry they aren't thinking clearly and they may say or do something they don't mean.*

- Know when to back off
 - *Try to hold yourself back from saying anything or reacting.*
 - *It might be better just to "stay out of the person's way until he/she calms down".*
 - *Remember: It's better to keep quiet even though you feel that you are right to answer back. Sometimes you have to sacrifice in order to have peace.*

- Don't ignore it if they are hurting someone or breaking something
 - Find a responsible adult who can help
 - *If it's a friend suggest they do something to handle their anger in a healthy way.*

- Don't encourage them to do something hurtful or dangerous

Later, let him/her know how you feel with an "I message":

I feel _____

When you _____

Because _____

(example: I feel uncomfortable when you yell and scream out of anger because it makes me feel uncomfortable and scared.)

The Anger Log

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What was your trigger?

- I did something wrong
 - Somebody started fighting with me
 - Somebody took something from me
 - Somebody did something I didn't like
 - Other _____
-

2. Where were you when you got angry?

- Home (outside room)
- My Room at home
- Yeshiva (outside of class)
- My Classroom
- Recess
- My Neighborhood
- Other _____

3. *How angry were you?(circle)*

1 -Burning Mad

2 -Really Angry

3 -Moderately Anger

4 -Mildly Angry

5 -Not Angry

4. *How did you handle your anger?*

Broke something

Counted backward or deep breathing

Cried

Hit or hurt someone

Talked it out

Told a friend

Told an adult (Rebbe/teacher/other_____)

Threatened someone

Walked away

Other _____

5. *Was the outcome:* Positive Negative

6. *Did you make anger work for you?* ___ Yes ___ No

7. *How did you handle yourself?*

___ Poorly ___ Not so Well ___ Okay ___ Good ___ Great

8. How would you handle your anger next time?

9. What did you learn about yourself from what happened? _____

CONTROLLING ANGER: OURS AND OUR CHILDREN'S

Quick Tips to Remember

- Parents who frequently lose their temper with their children heighten the risk of behavioral and emotional difficulties with their children.
 - Children respond best to calm and rational feedback.
- Be firm not angry; consistent while maintaining control.
- The short-term effectiveness of an anger-based punitive approach is misleading.
 - Children raised in such an atmosphere learn to behave well when in front of their parents, but are more likely to misbehave when they are away from them.
 - Teachers with the best behaved classes are typically those who yell the least and praise the most.
- Parents who lose their temper with their children do so primarily because of a desire to teach proper values.

- A child can internalize very little when anger dominates parental attempts to instill values.
- Harsh parenting often comes back to haunt parents in the form of later rebelliousness.
- The best way to maintain anger control is to pull back from an anger-provoking situation long enough to think things out clearly.
- Parents mistakenly feel they must control their child's behavior at ALL times.
 - Just before losing their temper, parents often have thought, "What's wrong with me that I have a child who acts this way?" or, "What's wrong with my child?" Such thoughts breed a sense of frustration and powerlessness, which inevitably leads to anger and ineffective response.
 - The more parents feel that they are not in control the more likely they are to get caught up in fruitless power struggles.
- There is a high tendency to ignore children's positive behavior.
- There is a predisposition to misread neutral behaviors as negative.

- An educator has the ability to be firm and consistent about what will be tolerated and the consequences for misbehavior.
- An educator must control the non-productive thoughts that feed his/her sense of powerlessness and replace them with an unemotional delivery of consequences for the misbehavior.
- We should not demand that our children be happy about doing what is asked of them.
 - Their level of emotionalism and defiance can be decreased by insisting merely that they comply, even while allowing them to express frustration.
- Parents do not need to rush to do something about a child's angry feelings. Sometimes the child needs to "experience" and deal with his/her anger.
- Once we allow ourselves to be pulled into the "fool's circle" of our children's provocations, the anger is in control of us rather than the other way around.
- When disciplining children, calm guidance and education should always supersede anger fueled by injured pride.
 - E.g. The question of "How can my child do this to me?"

- Children generally respond to anger by retaliating with their own anger.
- It is our responsibility to model how to responsibly deal with anger
- The greatest key to anger control is to buy time **before** reacting
- Once an educator steps back and calms down, he/she should try to view the situation from the child's perspective.
- Learn to recognize child's patterns and triggers for anger-provoking situations.
 - Try to diffuse a potential situation and preview when anger may be a likely outcome.
- Avoid spontaneous discussion when child is not motivated to talk.
 - Make an appointment with the child to discuss area of concern.